April 2016

Salt

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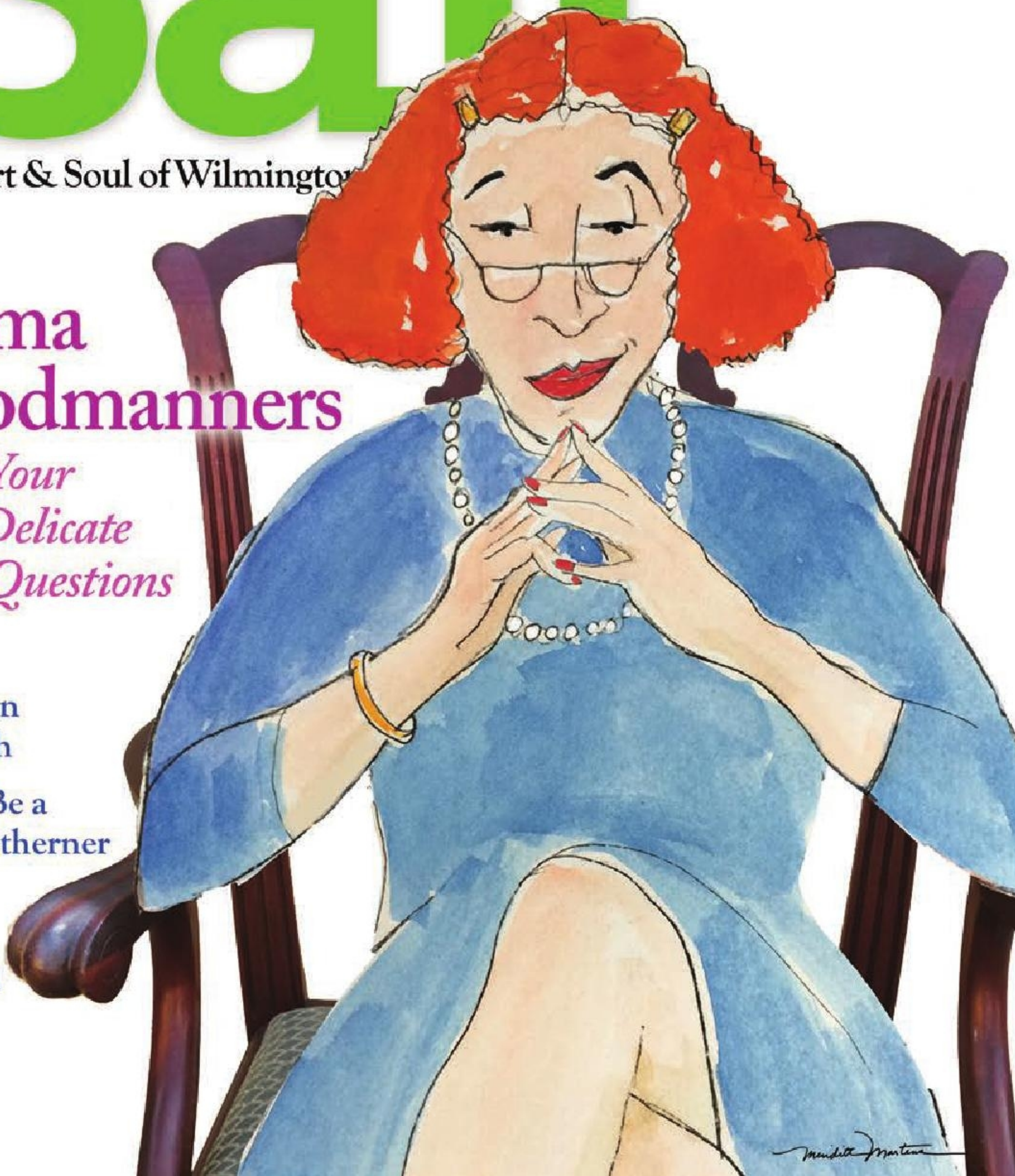
Comedian Cliff Cash

How to Be a True Southerner

Spanish Moss Unveiled



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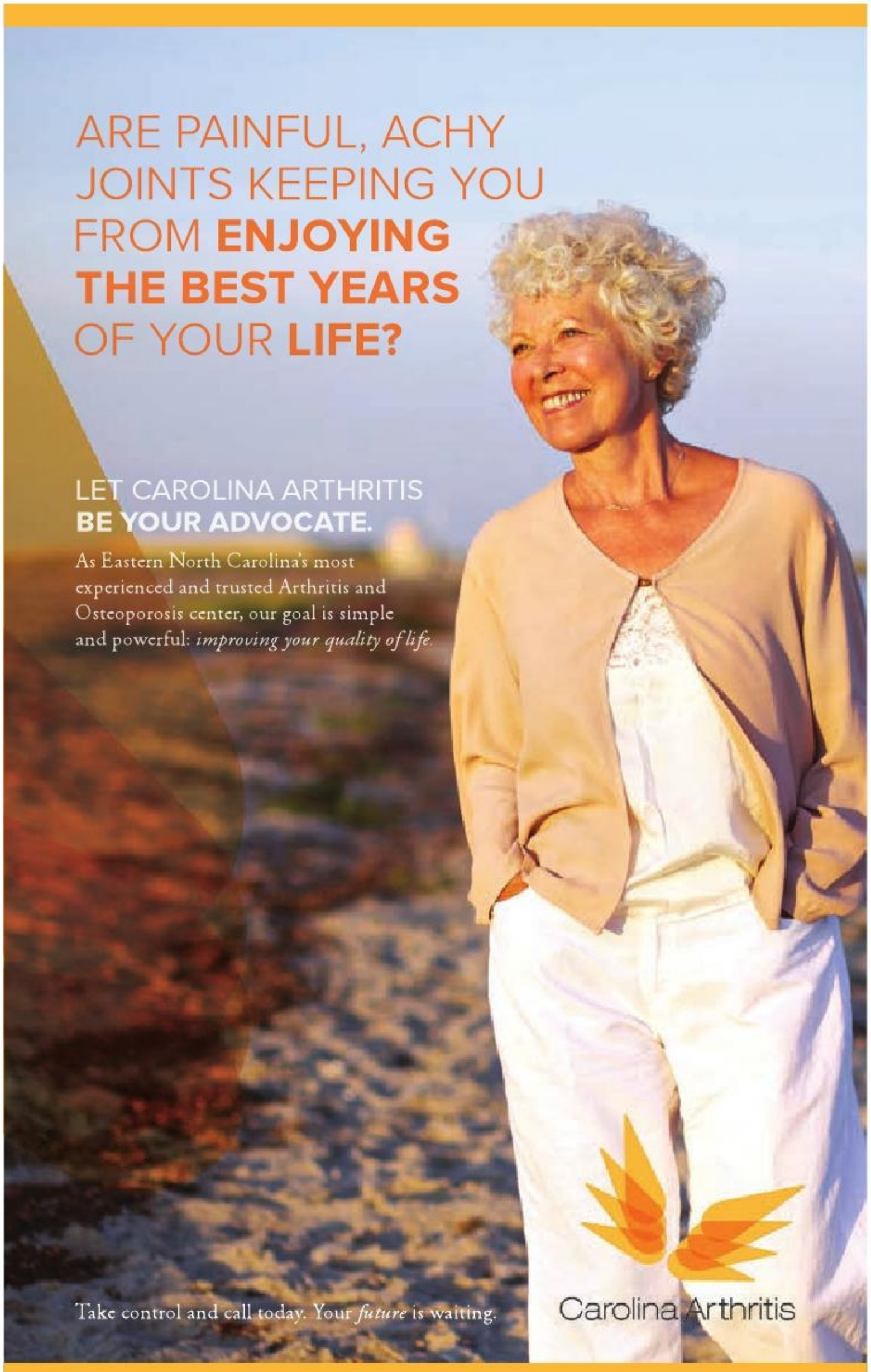
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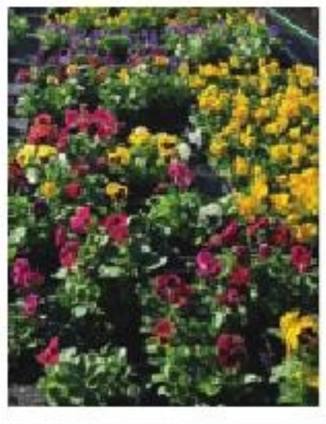

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My Easter Ace

By Jim Dodson

During the many years I lived quite happily near the coast of Maine, perhaps the hardest truth I had to finally accept is that April really is the cruelest of months, especially for gardeners and golfers. While the folks back home in Carolina were enjoying tulips in the front yard and the Masters on TV, more than once I found myself shoveling snow off the walk so we could go out to Easter services.

My nickname for the mental fever that commonly seized my spring-starved brain the first week of April then was "Masters Fever," a powerful mix of memory and desire and simple homesickness for my native South, characterized by a nearly overwhelming urge to mow a lawn and get gloriously dirty in a garden, hit a golf ball toward a sunlit green, and watch one of my golf heroes win the season's first televised major on TV. And lest I forget, there was also my mom's famous bourbon-glazed Easter ham.

The only fix I had for Masters Fever was a peculiar little ritual from my somewhat lonesome early teenage years, long before a driving license provided a means of escape to the far greater mysteries of girls and golf, a game I called "Ace." The object of Ace was to successfully wedge a Wiffle golf ball over my parents' house while imagining myself actually playing the most celebrated par-3 golf hole on the planet, Augusta National's 12th hole, aptly named "Golden Bell." A ball that flew successfully over the house without touching anything was deemed an "ace," a feat that was harder than you might expect.

Every golfer dreams of making an ace, though few ever do. An ace or hole-in-one is the rarest and most desired shot in golf, almost perfect in its Pythagorean simplicity: One swing and the ball flies through the air and goes into the hole. According to people who have nothing better to do than determine the mathematical odds of such things, the average golfer is due one every 12,500 golf swings, whereas a PGA professional is roughly half that. More than 90 percent of golfers will never make one, which tells you how difficult it is to achieve.

Jack Nicklaus had twenty to go with his eighteen major championships, his last coming during a practice round at the 2003 Senior British Open. Gary Player and Arnold Palmer scored nineteen and eighteen aces respectively. Tiger Woods made his first one at age 6, followed by seventeen more as his official career unfolded. Only three presidents, all Republicans, also scored aces: Eisenhower, Ford and Nixon, who made his with a 5-iron on the 2nd hole at Bel-Air Country Club in 1961. Afterward, Nixon described his hole-in-one as "the biggest thrill of my life — even better than getting elected."

I adopted the reduced version of "Ace" not long after marrying a lovely woman whose Scottish parents resided on a sprawling farm above Moosehead Pond in the central highlands of Maine. It involved the use of a real golf ball and a single bold — if symbolic — golf swing typically executed with haste during a commercial break during the annual CBS telecast of the Masters. At that point, my Masters Fever was at its most intense, yet rarely was my front yard fully visible beneath a crust of hard snow. At the outset of every golf season, I'll admit, I wondered if this was the year I would finally make an ace of my own and join golf's most coveted club. Somehow I even got it into my fevered head that if I could make a successful wedge shot after months of golf hibernation, sending a ball safely over my own roof with one cold swing, why, certainly, a real ace would follow in the new golf season on my doorstep.

My private quest for an ace (of any sort) came to a head, so to speak, on April 15, 1990, a cold but sunny Easter Sunday that also happened to be my mother-in-law's 63rd birthday, just days after Nick Faldo nipped Raymond Floyd to capture his second consecutive green jacket at the Masters.

My mother-in-law's name was Kathleen Sinclair Bennie, a formidable Scottish lady, crack gardener and school superintendent who early in our acquaintance informed me in no uncertain terms that "March in Maine — and most of April too — is still wintertime. The sooner you accept this, James, the happier you'll be. Spring will eventually arrive — just not anytime soon."

I liked Mum, as everyone in tiny Harmony, Maine, called her. I just wasn't sure she liked me, her first son-in-law. Though she was perfectly polite, Kate Bennie's Glasgow-accented body English seemed to say we had little or nothing in common save her beautiful daughter, Alison. Then again, why would we? Mum was a no-nonsense daughter of Glasgow's working-class Netherlee neighborhood, a dedicated socialist and self-declared agnostic who hadn't had the easiest of lives. After losing her parents after the war, she was raised by a sweet Scottish couple named Dorothy and Uncle Eddie and got herself brilliantly educated at Glasgow University. She married a fellow scientist named Sam Bennie and followed his work on construction of the Distant Early Warning Line to Canada and Alaska before settling down in the rambling 200-year-old farmhouse above beautiful Moosehead Pond with three small children and no indoor plumbing in a house heated only by woodstoves. My first visit to the Bennie home felt like stepping into a novel by Thomas Hardy.

Darkening the mood that April, Kate's husband, Sam, a charming son of Paisley who looked and sounded a bit like the actor Peter O'Toole, had passed away from cancer at the farm just one month before the rest of the family descended for the long Easter weekend. Scots are nothing if not an emotionally durable race, born to expect the worst weather in life, ready to push on regardless. As usual there were good Scottish meals served and polite political debates conducted by the fire. Neighbors popped in to say hello to Mum and see our new infant, Maggie. Not long before he died, Sam got to hold his first granddaughter and presented her with a sack full of adorable stuffed animals he'd gathered from his travels around the globe. He called them "The Star Dust Fan Club."

Good Eisenhower Republican that I was, hoping to finally break the ice with Mum, I'd brought her a special birthday gift, the latest novel by her favorite writer, A. S. Byatt.

She thanked me and placed the book aside on the reading table by her favorite armchair by the large farmhouse window near the kitchen woodstove.

Not long after the others cleared out for the two-hour drive back to Boston, and my wife, pregnant with our second child, went off to gather up belongings

and infant for the shorter trip home to the Midcoast, Mum finished cleaning up the kitchen, loaded up her woodstove and sat down with A. S. Byatt.

Suffering from perhaps my worst case of Masters Fever ever, I used this quiet moment to slip out to our car, fetch my new Hogan 9-iron and a brand new Titleist ball and hustle over to the far side of the small irrigation pond that fronted the ancient farmhouse and barn. A game of Ace was exactly what I needed. Owing to a nasty sleet storm during the Masters telecast, I'd missed performing my peculiar spring ritual.

Wood smoke was rising serenely from the front room chimney, looking a little like a fluttering flag to my spring-starved brain.

I judged the distance to clear the roof to be a whisker over 140 yards. The weather was clear and cold but a helpful breeze off Moosehead Pond was at my back.

Dropping the ball onto a tuft of hard ground, I took dead aim at the chimney and made a really fine golf swing.

I looked up to see the ball soaring beautifully into the blue sky.

Unfortunately, it came down directly through one of the large picture window panes where Mum was sitting.

Rushing inside, I found Mum sitting perfectly still in her armchair, still holding her book, her teacup undisturbed. Shards of window glass, however, were everywhere.

She silenced my stream of apologies with a lifted hand, motioning me forward. I carefully approached, bracing for a reproach worthy of Mary Queen of Scots when she discovered her worthless husband Lord Darnley skipping archery practice in favor of golf — shortly before she had him murdered.

She pointed to her teacup.

In it sat my golf ball, marinating in good Scottish black tea.

"James," Mum said gravely, "I just have one thing to say to you."

"Yes, ma'am?"

"I sincerely doubt whether you could hit that shot again if your very life depended upon it."

And with this, she smiled.

I smiled back. She had me pull up a chair. We talked for quite a while. I learned she actually liked me and thought I had the makings of a good husband and father. She thanked me for her book and pointed out several things we had in common, including good books, gardens, politics, a taste for expensive English gin, classical music and even golf.

Her Uncle Eddie, it turned out, had been the champion golfer of Netherlee Golf Club several times in his life. She suggested I look up his widow Aunt Dorothy on my upcoming trip to Scotland; I promised I would — and did.

More than ice and an old window were broken that Easter Sunday. A deep and enduring friendship was born. The Queen Mum — as I took to calling her — became the first reader of my first seven books, making invaluable corrections and suggestions.

More importantly, she guided our family through good times and bad, the glue that held us all together during the dark days of an amicable divorce no one saw coming. She was also among the first to welcome my new wife to the extended family some years later.

I drove to Maine to see her a few days before she passed away. I pulled up a chair and we shared these stories and many more before I kissed her goodbye for the last time.

"Tell me, James," she asked at one point. "Have you ever made your hole-in-one?"

"No ma'am," I admitted. "Just yours. And you're the only one who saw it."

I pointed out that Alison reminded me that the year after making my unofficial Easter ace, I knocked out the bathroom window of our new house — and never played Ace again.

This made her smile.

"Good," said the Queen Mum.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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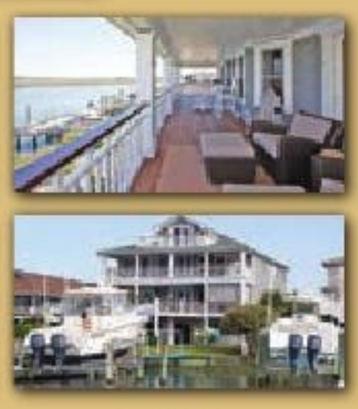

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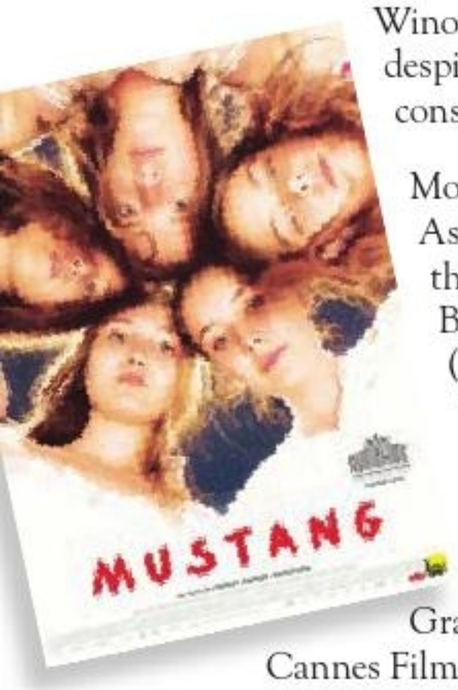
Pass the Popcorn

This month, Cinematique of Wilmington delivers yet another bag of goodies.

Monday, April 4, through Friday, April 8: *Mustang*, a semi-autobiographical drama co-produced by Turkish-French film director Deniz Gamze Ergüven and screenwriter Alice Winocour about five young orphaned sisters who, despite the limitations imposed upon them by their conservative guardians, remain unbroken.



Monday, April 11, through Wednesday, April 13: As the title suggests, *The Lady in the Van* tells the true story of the relationship between Alan Bennett (Alex Jennings) and Miss Shepherd (Maggie Smith), a transient woman who "temporary" lives in a van parked in Bennett's driveway for 15 years.

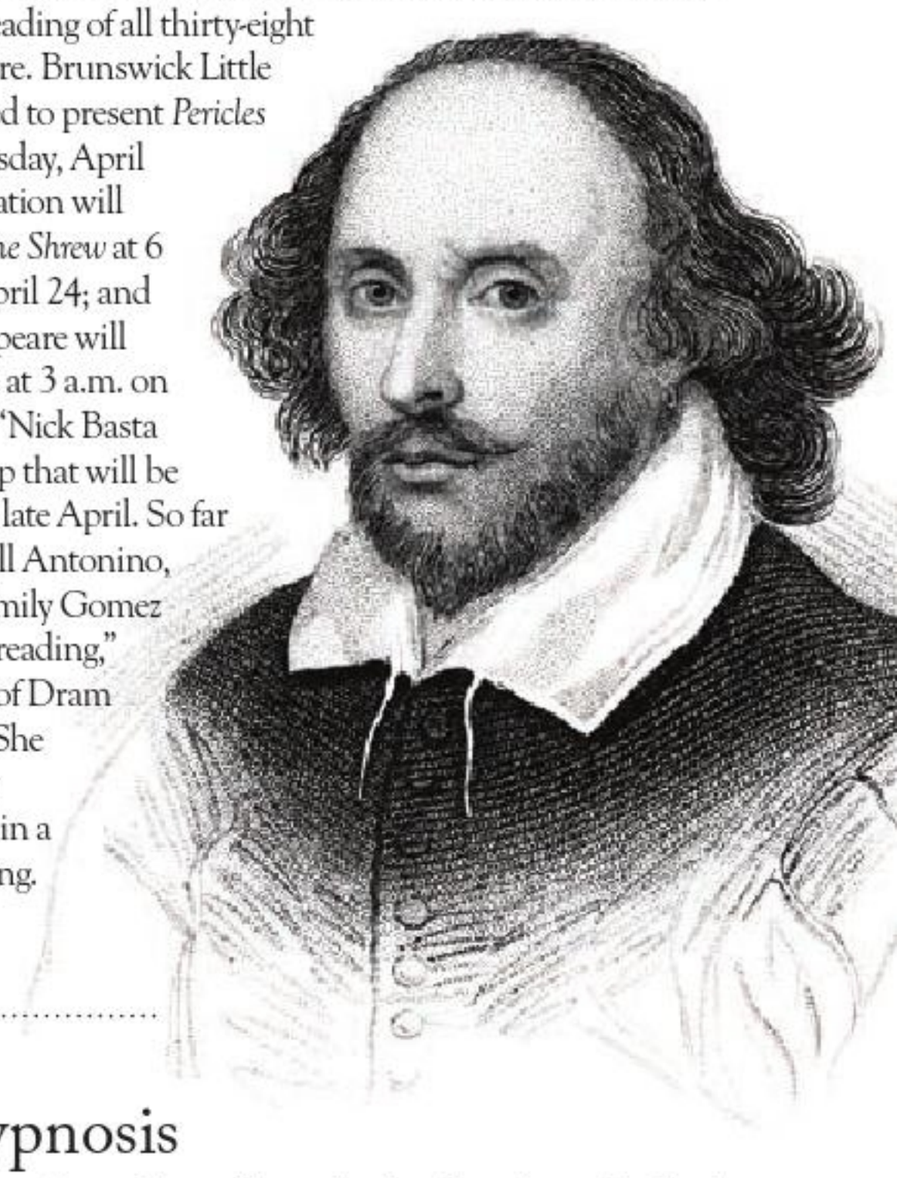
Monday, April 18, through Friday, April 22: *Son of Saul*, Grand Prix winner of the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, is a Hungarian drama set in the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II.

All films start at 7 p.m., with an additional 4 p.m. showing on Wednesdays. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets: $8. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

Come Out To Play

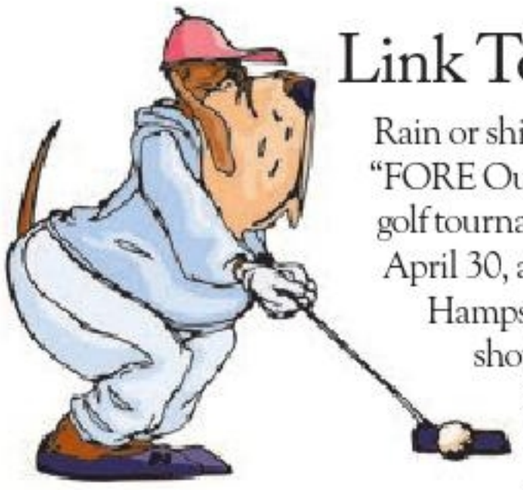
Four hundred years ago we lost the greatest playwright the English language has ever known. In honor of the anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, the North Carolina Museum of History will host *First Folio! The Book That Gave Us Shakespeare*, an exhibition from the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. that will visit all fifty states. Preceding the opening of the exhibition, Burning Coal Theatre Company will produce a five-day marathon staged reading of all thirty-eight plays by Shakespeare. Brunswick Little Theatre is scheduled to present *Pericles* at noon on Wednesday, April 27; Thalian Association will present *Taming of the Shrew* at 6 a.m. on Sunday, April 24; and Dram Tree Shakespeare will bring *Hamlet* to life at 3 a.m. on Tuesday, April 26. "Nick Basta is heading the group that will be going to Raleigh in late April. So far I believe he has Phill Antonino, Mirle Criste and Emily Gomez heading up for the reading," notes Alisa Harris of Dram Tree Shakespeare. She also hints that they might try to Skype in a Ghost for the reading.

-Gwenyfar Rohler



Enter Hypnosis

Meet The Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, eight brothers from the South side of Chicago, all sons of jazz legend Phil Cohran. Jazz roots combined with hip hop sensibility have taken this band of brothers on a soulful journey from street buskers to gigs with the likes of Erykah Badu. Today, they are known as one of the hottest and most well, hypnotic, bands around. Tickets: $22 (gallery); $30–38 (dress circle and parquet). Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.



Link Together

Rain or shine, Pender Humane Society's annual "FORE Our Furry Friends" Captain's Choice golf tournament will take place on Saturday, April 30, at Castle Bay Country Club in Hampstead. Registration begins at 8 a.m.; shotgun start at 9:30 a.m. Foursome: $80/person (includes breakfast, on-course boxed lunch, free beer, gift bags, and a Southern BBQ-style awards lunch post-round). Add to that a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and opportunities to win hole-in-one prizes ($10,000 for an ace on No. 12). Last year, for instance, Mark White won a new set of clubs from an ace made during tropical storm Anna. What's best is that it's all to help raise funds for a no-kill animal shelter dedicated to improving the lives of homeless and unwanted animals. Info: www.2016FOFFgolf.com.

Festival of Verse

"Let yourself become living poetry," wrote thirteenth-century Persian poet and Sufi mystic Rumi. We like to think this roughly translates to "don't miss Couplet," the annual poetry festival at Old Books on Front Street that coincides with National Poetry Month. On Saturday, April 23, the festival kicks off with an 11 a.m. Press 53 reading with Val Neiman, Sam Barbee and North Carolina Poet Laureate Shelby Stephenson. Go get lunch. Something poetic, like homemade soup du jour and black coffee. Afterward, Val Nieman will lead a poetry workshop at 2 p.m., and at 4:30 p.m., Craig Kittner will host an open mic. Witness the poetry of every moment—and be a part of it. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

Art in Bloom

Each spring during the North Carolina Azalea Festival, the Wilmington Art Association (WAA) presents its Annual Juried Spring Art Show and Sale, a mélange of original paintings, pastels, drawings, prints, photography, digital images, fiber art, mixed media and 3-D work. This year's show and sale takes place on Friday, April 8, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday, April 9, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; and Sunday, April 10, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. The WAA is a non-profit organization that provides scholarship assistance to college students and offers an outlet for emerging and professional artists. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonart.org.

A Living Tapestry

On Wednesday, April 13, at 7:30 p.m., LA-based dance company Contra-Tiempo will deliver *Agua Furiosa*, a new urban-Latin performance inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Oya, the Afro-American deity of wind and storms. Visually stunning and thought provoking, *Agua Furiosa* merges call and response, a live vocalist, water themes, fierce physicality and the performers' own personal narratives. The show challenges and inspires audiences to locate themselves inside the complex and transforming conversation of race in America. Tickets: $30. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 701 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or capefearstage.com.

Songs of Spring

Cape Fear Chorale's spring 2016 concert, *W. A. Mozart's Requiem in D*—a free performance—will take place on Sunday, April 17, 4 p.m., inside CFCC's Humanities and Fine Arts Center. If you've had the opportunity to experience this non-profit community chorus in concert, you won't want to miss the chance to hear their voices fill downtown's grand new performance space. And if you have heard them sing? Ditto. Concert features orchestra, guest conductor Dr. Welborn (Bill) Young, and music director Jerry Cribbs. Donations appreciated. Humanities and Fine Arts Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearchorale.org.

Coastal Flair

In January, at the 2016 Surf Expo in Orlando, Florida, custom yacht manufacturer Jarrett Bay launched a line of fine coastal-living apparel, now available locally at Intracoastal Angler at 6332 Oleander Drive. Known for thirty years for the quality and craftsmanship of their custom sport fishing vessels, Jarrett Bay's clothing collection includes rompers, maxi dresses, cardigans, shorts and T-shirts for women; woven shirts, cord shorts, utility shorts, T-shirts, polo shirt and pants for men. An extensive fashion line including boat shoes and sunglasses is on the horizon. See website for complete list of retail outlets or to shop online. Info: jarrettbayclothingco.com.

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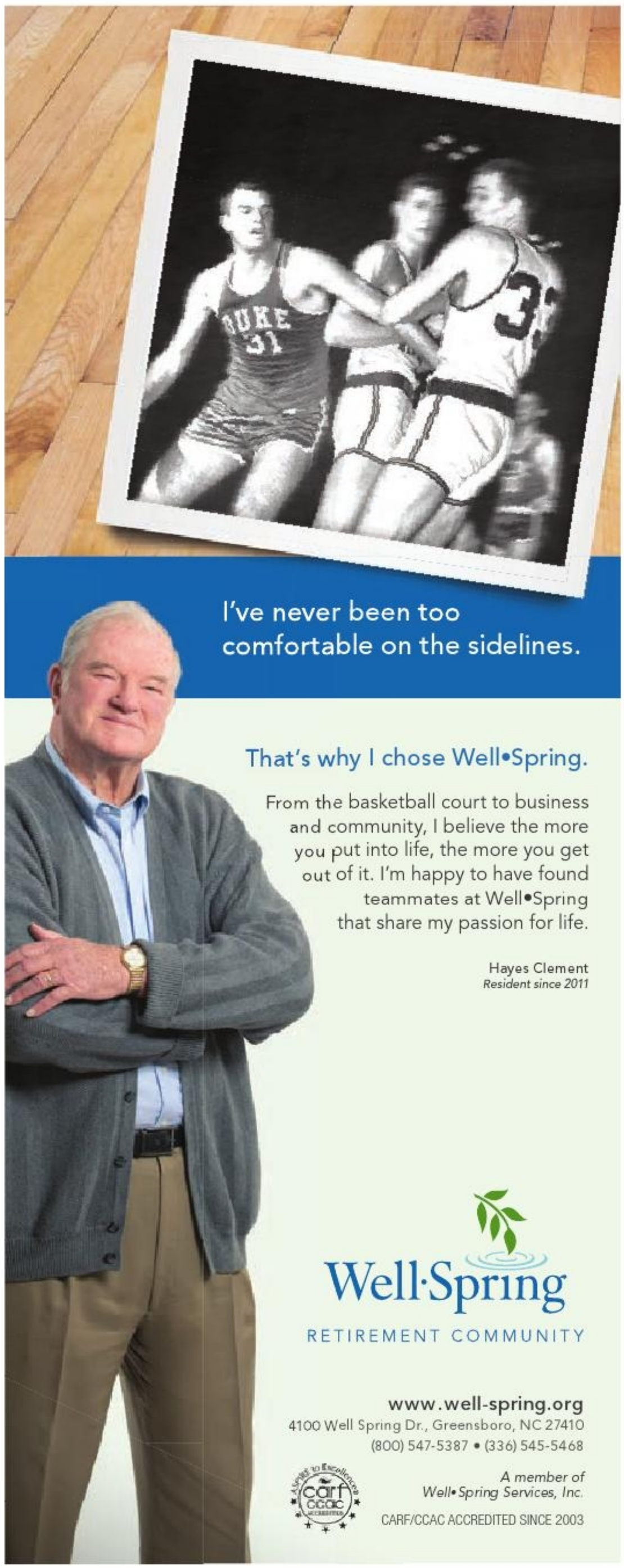
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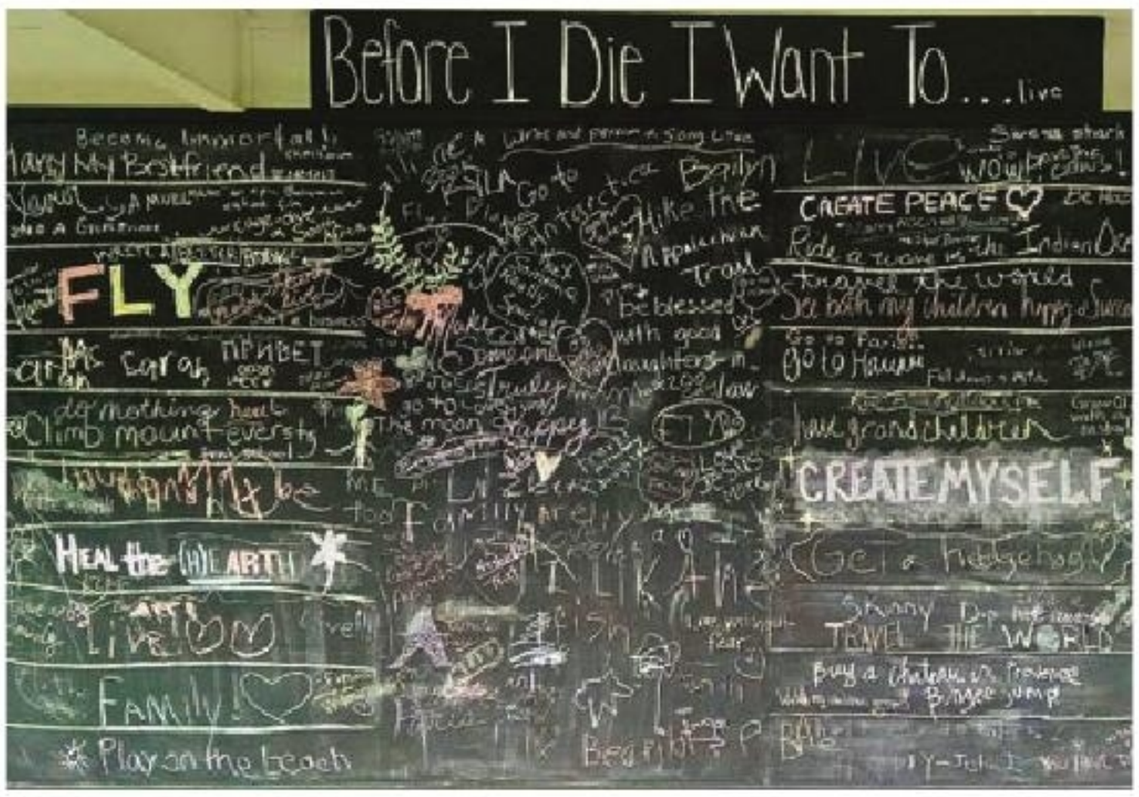
What the Garden Saw

The language of koi and writing on the wall



PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEY WAHL

By Ashley Wahl

All gardens hold secrets, tales of new beginnings and graceful exits — and untold beauty in between. Just ask the trees with the eye-shaped knots — ancient pillars holding space for love and magic.

Sometimes we catch glimpses too.

On a sunny March afternoon, spring whispering at the nape of the neck, whooshing Oleander traffic fades more with each step toward the four-tiered scalloped fountain.

Just beyond the entry gate of the New Hanover County Arboretum, an interactive wall teems with a mélange of dreams and visions penned in chalk by previous visitors. Standing before it feels deeply intimate — as if you could see the wishes attached to pennies at the bottom of a well.

New Orleans artist Candy Chang created the first "Before I Die" chalk wall on an abandoned house in her neighborhood in 2011. Today, there are over a thousand of them. A bucket of chalk invites Arboretum guests to openly yet anonymously express themselves:

Before I die, I want to _____.

Marry my best friend.
Go to the moon.
Live a whole day.

Read through and experience the exquisite gamut of human emotion. And the sensation that the collective dream, to live without limits, is no different from your own.

Hike the Appalachian Trail.
Have grandchildren.
Write and perform a song.
Ride a wave in the Indian Ocean.
Meet someone really special.
Get a hedgehog.
Bungee jump.
Move to Wilmington.

In big, shaky letters on the bottom right corner of the board: *Help my parents to be HAPPY. – John*

Followed by: *You Have. – Mom & Dad*

Just as the tide washes clean names scribbled on the beach, this wall is transient. Yet the seeds of intention are rooted deeply.

**

No buds in the Rose Garden, but the mind blossoms with thoughts of Golden Celebration, April in Paris and Eternal Flame as lovers disappear into the cypress-studded Bog Garden.

**

Inside the Japanese tea house I face the stream, imagine life as a water lily as wind moves through yellow groove bamboo.

Beyond the frame, saucer magnolias spill fragrant pink blossoms one by one like air kisses caught — or not — by passersby.

**

In the coming weeks, knotted trees will watch azaleas animate the path between the picnic tables and the Contemplation Garden, where a simple labyrinth invites quiet meditation.

As I walk toward the labyrinth's center, children's anthems filter through the air like sunbeams through an ancient oak.

"We're exploring," declares a young boy, right arm raised victoriously as he flashes across the labyrinth path.

"Exploring! Exploring!" echo the two girls trotting behind him.

A fourth child teeters faithfully after them, eyes big as his bobbing pacifier. His or mine, each step is an epic journey.

**

At the pond, peaceful lair of the resident dragon, aquatic plants dance above the water's surface, their stalks rustling in a language invoked by the swirl of koi brushing through willowy roots.

I count upward of sixteen fish, a blur of metallic orange, silver and gold. They think I am here to feed them, but the opposite is true. Like a well of wishes, they offer glimpses into a world that is ever-shifting and full of surprises. A world without limits.

Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.

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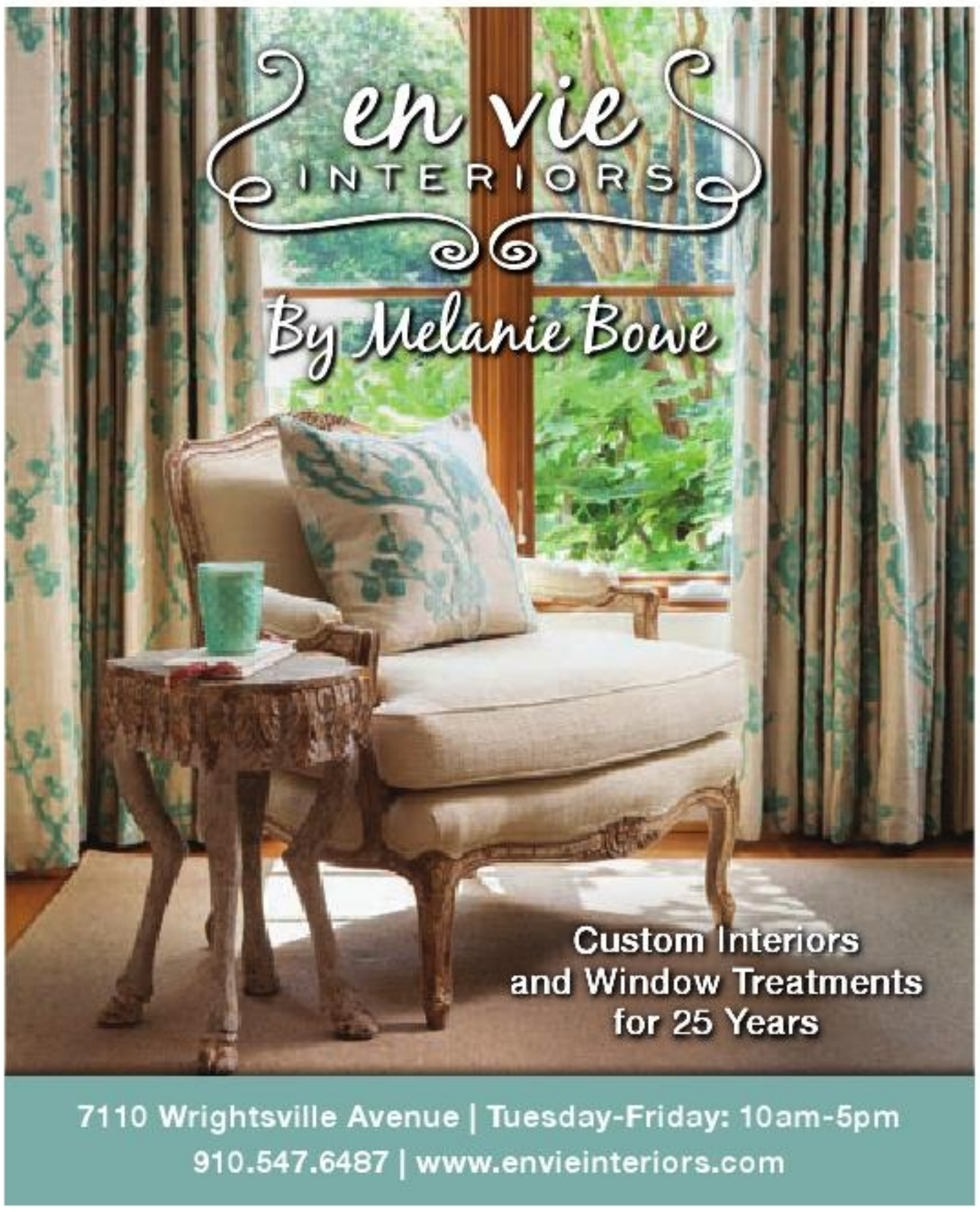
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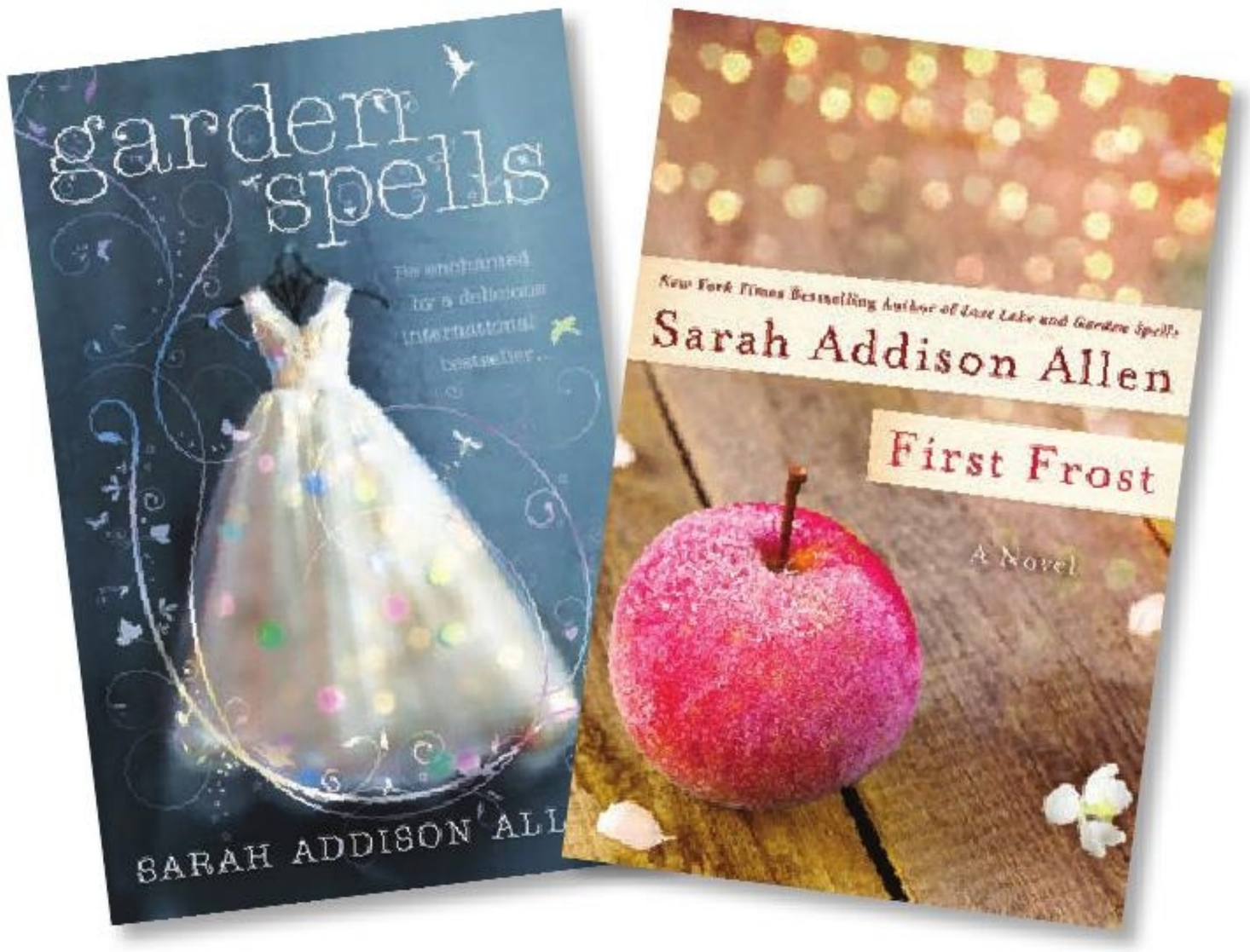
A Taste of Magic

What started in a garden continues to blossom with charm and wonder



By Gwenyfar Rohler

North Carolina is famous for producing some of the greatest literary writers in the American canon: Thomas Wolfe, Carl Sandburg, Maya Angelou. We're also home to a handful of present-day greats: Jan Karon, Orson Scott Card and Nicholas Sparks, to name a few. Among our *New York Times* best-selling authors of popular fiction residing in the state, Asheville native Sarah Addison Allen might be one of our best-kept secrets to date.

Allen's big breakthrough came with the publication of *Garden Spells* (2007), her magical realism-driven, food-infused novel of homecoming. Seven years later her readers got the long-awaited sequel detailing the life and loves of the Waverley family: *First Frost*.

In *Garden Spells*, the world is introduced to Bascom, North Carolina, a small town in the foothills where certain families are known to possess unique gifts that get passed down through the generations. The Youngs are always the strongest men in town, the strongest of each generation always named Phineas; Clark women are the ultimate seductresses; and the Waverleys . . . well, they have a special kind of magic all their own. Some of it comes from an association with their garden, which is regarded by all of Bascom with mythic awe. But as with many family legacies, some embrace the expectations that come with the gifts, and others don't. In Allen's breakthrough novel, the current generation of Waverley sisters, Claire and Sydney, must confront not only each other but the way they each respond to their gifts.

Sydney fled home after high school. Her older sister, Claire, stayed and has become entrenched in the world of Bascom — so much so that she cannot see herself apart from it or, of course, the magical Waverley Garden. One sister runs from her gift, the other clings to it, and yet when they find themselves together again under the same roof, they discover that their roles are actually reversed. They need each other in order to learn the lessons they have both been avoiding. Meanwhile that magical Waverley Garden is a phenomenal non-verbal character crossed with deus ex machina. The garden contains an apple tree that throws apples at people, grabs photos and holds them hostage, and even manages to stave off a homicide. Or, as Claire recounts following the incident: "I wish Tyler felt that way . . . He won't go anywhere near the tree now. He still can't get over it. He says it's probably the only official police report in history that claims an apple tree ran the suspect off and no one found that unusual."

Allen succeeds in avoiding the pitfalls of the trite or the stereotyped. Instead, she brings us an incredibly rich world filled with startling

revelations, challenges and, most important, captivating personal growth. Perhaps her two greatest gifts as a writer are a mastery of the five senses on each page, and an ability to surprise her characters and her readers simultaneously.

The magical realism elements blend with the five senses to leave an imprint on how we talk about simile and metaphor. For example, Sydney describes Claire in conversation: "She's like a live wire. She's actually singeing things." *Garden Spells* is a beautiful book filled with passion and captivating writing — just the sort of novel capable of launching a writer's career.

First Frost picks up the story of the Waverley family ten years later. Claire and Sydney have found and accepted their lives and abilities, but the next generation is starting to wrestle with the Waverley gifts. High school-aged Bay, daughter of Sydney, and 9-year-old Mariah, Claire's daughter, are no end of worry for their parents. Bay's gift is causing her coming of age and first love problems . . . but Mariah's doesn't seem to manifest at all. Claire begins to question whether her daughter is even a Waverley. What does that mean about how we define family and kinship? How do we love people if they aren't who we expect them to be? What does that mean about ourselves?

First Frost is a book written by a more experienced craftsman. The minor characters have more fleshed out back stories, and the struggles are more subtle, yet just as powerful and evocative. Parts of the magical realism are more pronounced: Sydney is literally growing red highlights in her hair in front of her husband's eyes. But even more pronounced are the smells provoked by the book: scaled sugar, burnt roses, ham casserole, etc., and the incredible talent that Allen has for making you hungry while you read. (I cooked more reading this book than I have in the last month combined.) But Allen's real talent is showing us something about our own fears and how we do or don't face them, that we can approach them with awe rather than terror — and that if we reach out and ask for help, we can find it. At the core of her writing is the message that love is the strongest magic in the world. What a beautiful reminder.

Allen's books are filled with charm, love and an abiding understanding of the imperfect world of family relationships. In a few pages of what would be considered good escape reading, the author reaches deeply into our hearts, reminding us what art can really do: transform our humanity.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street in Wilmington.

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Points for Cool

George James at Fish Bites

By Dana Sachs

When I met George James for lunch at Fish Bites on Carolina Beach Road, he had just finished volunteering at Bellamy Elementary School, where he tutors second-, third- and fourth-graders. "How much time do you spend at Bellamy?" I asked.

"I go four days a week, five hours a day, so twenty hours a week."

"Twenty hours!" I exclaimed. "That's like a job."

James started to laugh. "To me, it's not. To me, I'm retired."

He doesn't seem retired. As a member of the New Hanover County Foster Grandparent Volunteer Program, James, who is 71, seems like a guy with a half-time job that he loves but doesn't get paid for. Talking with him, you can see how this arrangement makes perfect sense. Gentle and soft-spoken, he exudes a laid-back patience that will lower the anxiety of kids trying to learn their times tables. And though he may look like a grandfather, he earns points for cool with his amber-colored glasses, diamond stud earring (a retirement gift from his daughters), and easy laugh. Finally, he's a man who understands that doing good for others also benefits himself. Working as a Foster Grandparent, he told me, "is keeping my mind active. You have to be sharp with those kids."

James gets enormous satisfaction from tutoring. He told me about a little girl, for example, who struggled with her "core words," which are words that may be difficult to work out phonetically and, thus, need to be memorized, such as "laugh" or "brought." Sitting together in Bellamy's library, James listened to the girl read and, every so often, timed her to see how many core words she could recognize in a minute. "She started with twenty words a minute. Then she said, 'Hey! I've gone from twenty words to sixty!' She just beamed."

These days, the girl is reading above grade level. Not surprisingly, her parents are thrilled and the child is gaining confidence. For James, that progress means everything. "The kid is happy, but the enjoyment I get is I can see that I've helped someone. It's like we're two bubbly people!"

James is not a lifelong educator. In 1999, he retired after thirty-one years as a chemical operator at Cape Industries. He had too much energy to stay home, though, so he drove a school bus for the next eleven years, long enough to watch elementary students move on to high school, and even graduate. The way he describes those children says everything about his love for young people: "I had really, truly good kids." In the rare event that a child misbehaved on his bus, James merely said a word or two to the child or their parents. In a sense, he built a community of trust during the time it took to travel to school and back.

James grew up in Wilmington and went to school at Gregory Elementary, Williston Junior High, and Williston High School. Back then, he told me, people had roots in the community. "Teachers, when I was growing up, they knew your parents. They went to church with you, shopped with you." If a kid did something wrong, he remembered, "Miss Johnson might say, 'Do I need to tell your parents?' And she would! She'd see them in the drugstore."

His grandparents lived near the Intracoastal Waterway south of Monkey Junction (back then "a little crossroads where a gas station owner kept a mon-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

key"). Because the area remained mostly rural, James and his friends could tramp south through undeveloped forest and swim across the inlet to Carolina Beach. All that time spent outside taught him independence, creativity and how to get along with others. "We made our own toys," he told me. "A two-by-four and a pair of skates: You've got a skateboard. A go-cart: Take an apple box, a two-by-four, a door spring, and the wheels off a baby carriage — you're good to go!"

Living so close to water also led to a love of seafood. At Fish Bites, we started with wild-caught Maine black mussels in a garlic sauce and oyster bombs — fresh local Stump Sound oysters baked in the half-shell beneath melted cheese, bacon bits, and chopped green onion. James tried a couple of mussels first, then picked up a "pita point," which is a triangle of fried bread. "Now it's time for the big dunk," he said, before demonstrating how well it worked as a vehicle for sopping up extra sauce.

We moved on to the oysters. After savoring for a long moment, James said, "That . . . that . . . that's on point. You can taste the different flavors. Oh, Man!"

I started to laugh. "You must be great with kids."

James looked at me slyly. "Mine would tell you, 'No!'"

Fish Bites serves the freshest local fish available, plus staples from farther away, like swordfish and Faroe Islands salmon. We tried salmon slathered in spinach pesto and topped with a mound of snow crab, and soft flour tacos filled with rare tuna, lettuce, chopped red onion, sour cream, shredded cheese and a sweet and spicy mango salsa. The tacos came with zucchini fries that would hold up well against your garden-variety potato. "I like the idea of substituting zucchini for French fries," James said. "Kids wouldn't know they're getting veggies."

Fish Bites' owner Donnie Boltz is a local seafood distributor and commercial fisherman. He also makes many of the restaurant's desserts, including bananas Foster cheesecake and a whipped-cream covered, cocoa-infused angel food cake that was so light and airy that, James said, "it reminds me of cotton candy."

Having spent his whole life in Wilmington, James has witnessed both the positive and negative effects of the area's growth. "Families have no roots here," he said. In a sense, the time James spends with children helps families create connections and develop those roots. Often, he runs into kids he once drove on his bus or helped with reading. "Hey, Mr. James!" they'll say when they see him.

It's a big commitment to work twenty hours a week and not get paid for it, but James relishes the time he spends tutoring. "I get up in the morning and I've got something to do," he told me. "I get home at one o'clock and I've got the rest of the day for myself."

And he loves those kids. "At Christmastime," he said, "when school is closed for a few weeks, I miss them."

The Foster Grandparent Volunteer Program welcomes new applicants and hopes to attract more male volunteers in particular. To find out more, contact Beth Wooten, the program's coordinator, at (910) 798-6408 or at BWooten@nhcgov.com. Fish Bites Fresh Market and Seafood Restaurant is at 6132-11 Carolina Beach Road. For more information, call (910) 791-1117 or visit www.fishbitesseafood.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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The White Side of Burgundy

There's more to chardonnay than its ubiquity

By Robyn James

"I'll have a glass of chardonnay, please." With these words, millions of people order up a glass of what is by far the world's most popular type of wine. Yet as they sip their chardonnay, only a tiny proportion of them are aware that the grape that gives its name to the wine they are enjoying is also responsible for some of the finest wines in the world, the great white wines of Burgundy.

The chardonnay grape is capable of producing — with a little time and care — very decent wines almost everywhere it is grown. But it is only in Burgundy, where it first originated, that it reaches and achieves the sublime perfection of which it is capable.

White Burgundy is very different from New World chardonnay — that is, chardonnay, as it's known in the States. Americans have grown to love the warm sunniness of New World chardonnay. But the grape performs best in the cool, chalky soils of Burgundy.

Since the French have very strict laws about what grapes can be grown where, they assume you know the white wines of Burgundy are chardonnay, so they label their wines with the geographic location of the village such as Pouilly-Fuissé, Puligny-Montrachet, Chassagne-Montrachet, Chablis and Meursault.

In the village of Chablis, the heavy limestone soil produces a pale, dry wine that, despite its acidity, is soft and immediately drinkable. It is often fermented in stainless steel tanks rather than small oak barrels.

In the Côte de Beaune you will find peach, apple and lemon flavors plus a little hazelnut, honey and enough minerals to make the wine distinctive.

Wines from the Montrachet and Corton-Charlemagne vineyards can be phenomenally expensive, as much as several hundred to a thousand dollars a bottle. The producers of these wines do not sell it; they allocate it, rationing out a few cases at a time to favored distributors.

However, white Burgundy can be affordable too — try some of these wines from the Mâconnais:

Château Vitallis Mâcon-Fuissé, approx. $18

Underneath the austere exterior, there's a fruity character, with layers of citrus, kiwi and white peach flavors, along with the richness from having been aged in wood.

Henry Fessy "Sous La Roche" Pouilly Fuissé, approx. $25

"This wine is structured and concentrated, showing a tight character that is closed and firm. It has enough fruit for the future to show its potential richness. Concentrated, very mineral." Rated Editor's Choice, 92 Points, *The Wine Enthusiast*

Jean-Marc Brocard Chablis Sainte Claire, 2014, approx. $24

"A textbook flinty aroma gives way to green apple, lemon and mineral flavors in this white, which shows fine depth and richness, offset by vibrant acidity. Excellent length. Drink now through 2020." Rated 91 Points, A Smart Buy, #47, *Wine Spectator's Top 100 Wines Of The Year* 2015

Robyn James is proprietor of The Wine Cellar and Tasting Room in Southern Pines. Contact her at robynajames@gmail.com.

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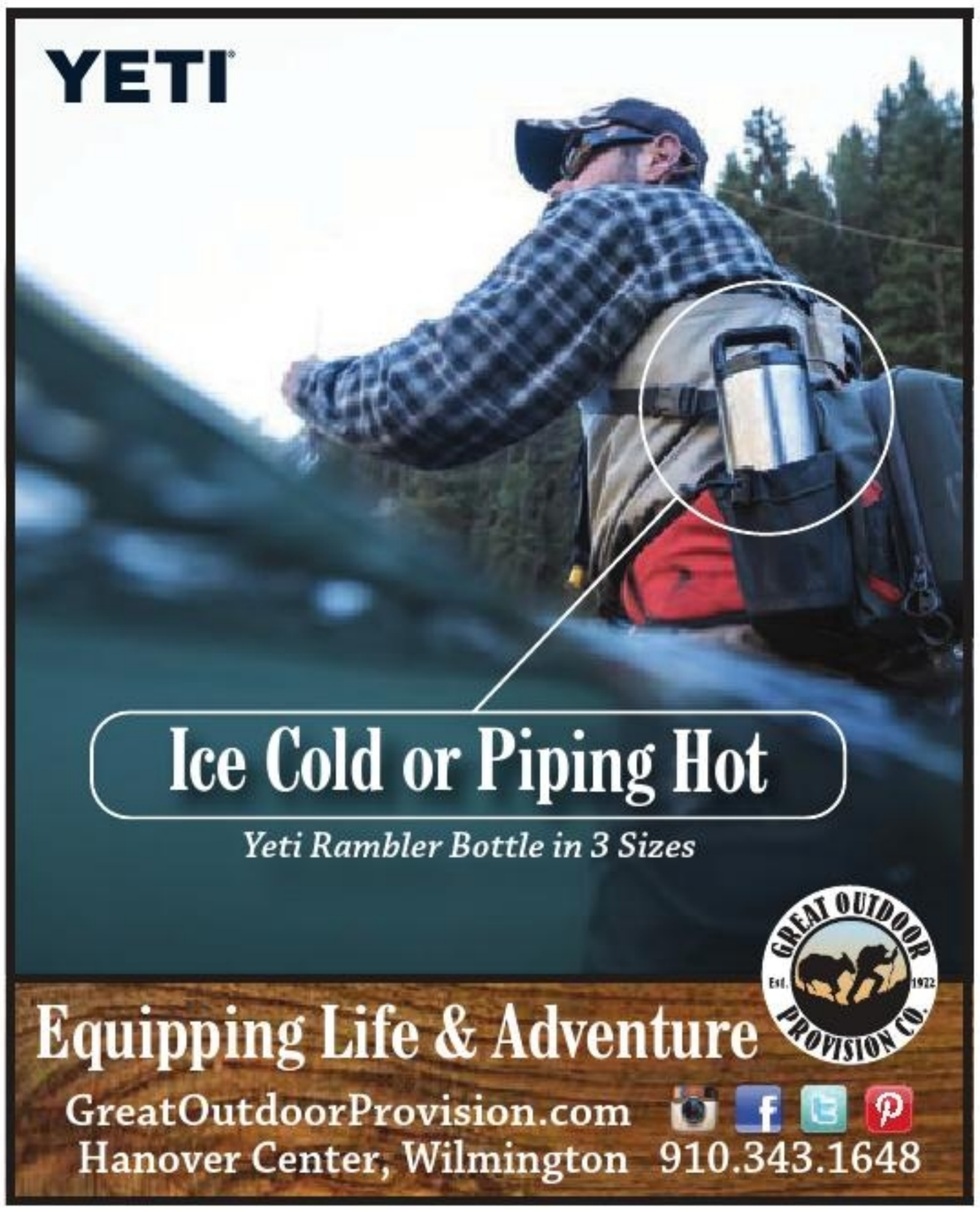

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Waiter, There's Something Fishy With My Salad

And I like it

By Jason Frye

In this new series I'll be exploring food and drink one sip, bite, ingredient or dish at a time. It could be fine dining, it could be a funnel cake, it could be something I found at the farmers market, but it will always be delicious.

I'd eaten at Wasabi a half-dozen times before I realized I was ordering sushi from a Korean chef; then I started ordering exclusively, and in-rotation, the four excellent Korean dishes on the menu. The table would be loaded with two kinds of kimchi, a spicy crab salad, our cups of tea, and whatever else we'd ordered, and I'd be stuffed. There was no reason to look elsewhere on the menu.

Until one day I did.

That's when I discovered my current favorite dish: Salmon Skin Salad.

No. You're going to have to wipe that look off your face before I go any further.

How do I know you have a look? Because salmon gets a bad rap as too fishy, too bland; too oily, too dry; too this or too that. And because I know the face my nephew would make when I told him I ate salmon skin that had been broiled until perfectly crispy; tossed with cucumbers, scallions and ponzu sauce; then, finally, sprinkled with tobiko.

To my nephew's credit, he's 12, and I don't think he knows ponzu sauce from plum sauce, wouldn't eat flying fish roe on a bet, and has never eaten a piece of salmon, much less the skin. Also, he lives on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (that he dips in ranch dressing and sprinkles with shredded cheese, but I digress. I mean, we were talking about something appetizing here).

But we're adults. We eat sushi. We're no strangers to salmon or roe or salmon roe. We like trying new things and expanding our food vocabulary. Right?

Right?

Back to the dish. It's amazing. A study in textures as the skin is indeed crispy, but the bits of salmon belly clinging to it are tender and rich, a concentrated bite of salmon's most powerful and subtle flavors. The cucumber offers a cool vegetable crunch as a counterpoint, and then the scallion brings in that pinprick punch of flavor. Finally the roe, the tobiko, which pops, spreading sweetness across the end of the bite and bringing balance to the citrusy ponzu.

It's a perfect little oddball salad, something unexpected and totally new in my food cosmos.

Wasabi Sushi is located at 417 College Acres Drive, Wilmington.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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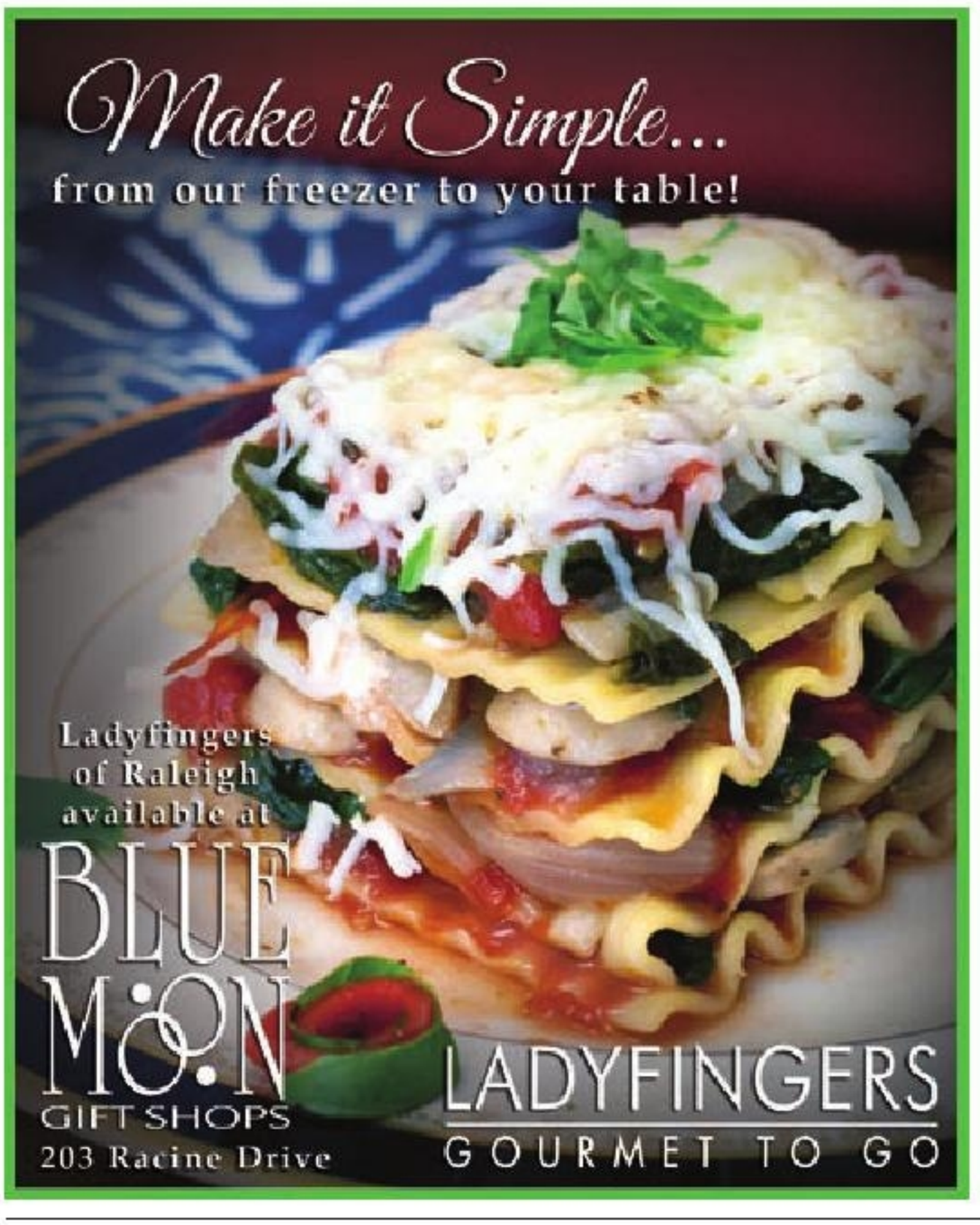
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The Card-Carrying Southerner

A mini-guide for those from someplace else

By Nan Graham

I was once asked to teach a class on how to be a Southerner. After picking myself off the floor and recovering from hysterical laughter, I respectfully declined.

But it makes me think that there really is a need for a card for newcomers to our part of the world . . . those "from someplace else," as I like to call them, since I consider the "Y" word unkind. Laminated, this card could be carried in your wallet like your driver's license or how-to-tip card.

The card would be a ready aid for those unfamiliar with Southern mores and customs. You could refer to it discreetly as needed. Learn to palm this card and pretend to cough when you glance at the appropriate Southern reference.

1. Food:

Southerners could easily adopt the Malaysian culture, whose greeting is not, "How are you?" but instead, "Have you eaten?" I believe that salutation could be right up there with, "How's your Mama?" which is usually the second thing Southerners say after their opening shot. We do love our food.

Foods you eat, serve and discuss in detail:

Watermelon . . . how to select, how to cut, how to eat. Thumping a melon is akin to tire kicking in the automobile world. It may not tell you anything, but it sure makes you look like you know what you are doing. The trick is to flick your index finger off your thumb and strike the surface of the watermelon. Bend your cocked head toward the melon and listen intently. The best watermelons will have a distinct hollow sound as opposed to a flat, non-resonant sound. Even if you can't tell the difference, pretend you can.

Always cut the melon long-ways. Like the deviled egg or asparagus spear, watermelon is considered a finger (or hand-held) food by some. Eating with a fork is permissible if you prefer not to bury your face in the juicy crimson crescent.

Know when to say barbecue and when to say pig pickin' (remember, it is essential to drop the final g).

Understand that grits is never eaten with sugar. It is a cardinal Southern sin. Butter, salt and pepper, please. Grits is a singular collective noun . . . never refer to it as they or them. You will never meet a single grit as they always hang out in an inseparable crowd. "Yes. Grits? I will have some more of it." . . . Never them.

When speaking of produce, be sure to use the specific name. White corn will not do; say "Silver Queen" or "Peaches and Cream." Same goes for tomatoes. It's "Better Boy" or "Best Boy." This specificity gives you that air of agrarian authority we Southerners love to affect.

Okra is a quintessential Southern food. Overcoming the dreaded slime factor is essential for the okra indoctrination. Start with fried okra and graduate to pickled okra and gumbo.

Deviled eggs are required at most Southern gatherings. It is imperative that you have a platter designed and designated specifically for the deviled egg. I claim deviled eggs my long suit. Refusing to call them "stuffed eggs," I consider them a staple of every Southern party and picnic: the gastronomical treat that's hard to beat. And catnip to all men.

I have Mama's hobnail glass deviled egg plate, a must for any Southern soul serving deviled eggs at home or abroad. I was shocked to learn that my friend Jane, planning to take the ubiquitous eggs to her family reunion, did not possess such a plate . . . that round glass or china platter with a dozen half egg-shaped wells encircling it. In the flat center, you can put more eggs or sliced tomatoes and cukes, pickled okra or some such. I bought Jane this necessity as an early Christmas gift. She can now avoid being the object of muffled snickering at the family gathering.

My own egg plate once ventured out to a WHQR Public Radio Board and Commentator party. I covered the to-die-for eggs garnished with cherry tomatoes and basil with Saran wrap, parked on an unusually busy Front Street and headed out, eggs elevated shoulder-high on one hand to maneuver my way through the crowd to the destination a block away.

I got to the address and read the sign. It was a hookah bar. I thought the Board had really kicked over its traces with a fresh and interesting choice of venue. I sailed through the incense, deviled eggs on high, toward a bearded man. Like a stout, elderly Blanche DuBois, eternally dependent on the kindness

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of strangers and poor lighting, I asked if this was the place for the WHQR party.

The bearded gentleman inside could not have been nicer . . . or more confused. His usual clientele is rarely an ancient woman carrying an egg plate aloft in one hand, waitress-style, and clutching an email with the address and phone number in the other.

"No, no WHQR board meeting here," he assured me. I showed him my email. "Yes, this is the same address." Always prepared, I had no cellphone with me.

"Can you call this phone number for me?" I asked. He returned from the phone with another address on Third Street. "Your host was wondering where you were . . . with your deviled eggs."

I thanked him warmly, trudged back to the parked car to drive around the block. When the party was over, I took my empty egg plate to go home. Too bad the deviled wonders were all gone . . . I really would like to have left a few with that lovely Hookah gentleman.

2. Loving our pests and critters:

Never show a fear of waterbugs, aka, roaches. Like a horse, a roach can sense your fear. It might become aggressive. Genteel South Carolinians call them Palmetto bugs. "Palmetto bugs" doesn't really work for this Carolinian. I suggest you give them individual names and pretend they are family pets. Frisky or Big Mo. Saddle them up and have the younger grandchildren ride them.

Do not attempt this familiarity with the no-see-ums or even the see-ums native to this part of the country, a species of tiny insects clearly too size-challenged to be wrangled or too ornery to be domesticated.

3. Language:

Use lots of similes and metaphors in your colorful narrations. Make hyperbole your best friend:

"Most politicians are as crooked as a dog's hind leg."

"South Carolina is too small to be a republic and too large to be an insane asylum."

My favorite from the late Doug Marlette: a little Southern "town so backwoods even the Episcopalians handled snakes."

Giveaways to avoid: Never say soda instead of soft drink or Cocola. Only north of the Mason-Dixon is it soda or pop.

And our glorious, long-gone Wrightsville Beach beachfront pavilion . . . wondrous, blazing with lights "like a Baptist window," as Truman Capote once wrote. It's called Lumina, not the Lumina. Never use the article to speak of the historic building. It will reveal you as an outlander.

*Note: Two references to Southern authors, Doug Marlette and Truman Capote, establish the fact that you are familiar with regional literati.

Name dropping is encouraged.

Do not say "Hi" instead of the requisite "Hey" upon meeting a stranger on the street. Do not revert to omitting any greeting at all. In the South, if it moves, you speak to it.

4. Acceptable Pets:

Boykin spaniels, Plott hounds, Labrador retrievers or any hunting dog . . . no Maltese or Yorkies or combo lapdogs (peekapoos) will do. Not manly enough. Even a couch potato mutt must affect the nonchalant air of a sporting breed. And please have a story and breed name for that rescue dog. "Oh, that's Thurston. He's a Fuquay-Varina Spaniel. Very rare, but a fine hunter. Comes from a Southern breed that accompanied General Beauregard at the launching of the Hunley submarine in Mobile?" (The question mark at the end of your sentence is said with a lilt, which indicates it is not really a question, but a reassurance that surely your listener already knows these facts.)

5. Ancestors:

Get some. This is essential. Portraits are available in all antique stores. Also check consignment stores. Hang in your living room and make up outrageous stories about your newly purchased eccentric. "This is great-aunt Hettibelle. She was one of five sisters whose folks named each daughter with 'belle' at the end of her name: Lulabelle, Marybelle, Annabelle and Corabelle. Unfortunately the name did not prove prophetic as you can plainly see by Hettibelle's portrait. Notice the artist included a feathered fan in the portrait." (Wave your hand gracefully toward the painting.) "This is the artist's nod to Hettibelle's passion. She raised chickens, which she named after Biblical characters and trained to do a sort of nineteenth century line dance. General Sherman was so enthralled with the hens' performance that he left the 'Big House' standing but did gallop off with Bathsheba and Esther, two of Hettibelle's favorites, tucked under his blue jacket." Your story can continue, unless your listener's eyes appear to have glazed over.

6. Nicknames:

Invent one. They are as essential as ancestors. Bill Slocumb from Goldsboro was nicknamed Suicide Slocumb. Unfortunately, his occupation was commercial airline pilot. My husband always said if the pilot ever came on and announced "Hello, this is your pilot, Suicide Slocomb," that I was to deplane immediately. I have a feeling I would have company exiting the plane.

There you have it. Your own mini-guide to transforming yourself into a Southern local. Simple. And just in time for the tourist season!

Salt contributor Nan Graham is a true Southerner and the literary doyenne of the Cape Fear.

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Island in the Sun

Six miles north of Wrightsville Beach, an inlet flows to a timeless place where Nature is gatekeeper

By Robert Rehder

The island was pure back then — wild, free and mysterious. Home to all kinds of creatures, surrounded by a vast marsh and protected by a dense maritime forest, it was at once lovely and eerie. Some of it still remains today, suspended as if in another world between two aggressive coastal developments. Fragile now, it languishes in a state of perpetual unrest, subject to the vagaries of tide, wind and storm. It could soon be gone, but not now — not yet. When I first went there on a warm spring day many years ago, it was alive, vibrant and thriving. It would shape my understanding of what an untouched place is, burning in me a lifetime of vivid memories. The island is known as Hutaff, and the inlet that fed it was called Elmore's. The old charts show Elmore's Inlet as an obscure, shallow passage to the sea some six miles north of Wrightsville Beach. It formed the northern boundary of Hutaff Island, whose southern border is Rich's Inlet. I had heard tales of the island with its abundant wildlife, soaring dunes and crystal waters. The stories were fascinating, and having never been there, I was determined to find my way.

Will Rehder (with pipe) and friends at the old fishing shack at Hutaff Island, circa 1930.

So I went that spring morning — a day I will never forget, a day of discovery filled with adventure and raw beauty. I had a shallow-draft, flat-bottomed boat, sturdy and well-suited for the trip. The island was surrounded by a thousand acres of Spartina marsh through which the clear, raveling inlet weaved and turned finally to the sea. Massive, luminous dunes stretched like pyramids along the booming surf.

I moored my boat in a deep, calm bay and camped that evening in a grove of trees on the north end of the island. The inlet swirled and eddied below me. It was high and cool there with an inshore wind whistling though the dunes. Cedar, bay and holly surrounded my campsite. Petite red flowers known as Indian blanket grew along the slopes with pink horsemint and delicate white blooms of wild blackberries.

Sheltered by a canopy of cherry laurel, the remains of an old fishing shack lay nearby along a salt creek. Three black racers had taken up residence there with a colorful corn snake and two itinerant raccoons. Marsh rabbits scurried through thick underbrush. I would see these creatures, or their offspring, for many years to come. Songbirds came to roost in the surrounding groves as dark approached. The deep resonant call of a barred owl echoed from somewhere down the ridge. It was a quiet and peaceful night, inured with a sense of loneliness.

Over that trip and many more, I began to learn the island's secrets — red drum that fed on blue crabs along the outer bars in spring; summer flounder we called "doormats" among the mullet and menhaden in the backwaters; iridescent blue and rose speckled trout that came into the surf sloughs chasing live shrimp in the fall. The island had a siren charm — the clean rush of summer rain, a smoky red moon rising from the sea, the haunting cry of tundra swans flying fast down a northeaster. It was an unfolding of nature that I could not have imagined and have never seen since.

In summer, ospreys labored into flight from remote tidal shoals with fish impaled on talons the size of a man's fist. Hunting sparrows, sharp-shinned hawks swooped through the hammocks at eye-level. The marshes audibly popped, hissed and croaked with marine life. Purple martins regularly descended there, banking and diving through the sky, feeding ravenously on mayflies, mosquitoes and other winged creatures. Each day it seemed there were new discoveries — an endless array of nature's artistry.

I visited the island as often as I could, camping always in the friendly grove. Throughout the warm months, shore birds of all sorts, shearwaters, oystercatchers, terns, plovers and skimmers, nested on the bare beach and gathered in raucous bands. Shrimp came fresh from the backwater channels, and small clams we called "littlenecks" seemed to clunk at every pull of the rake. In the forest and hammocks, game trails led to acorns, wild scuppernong and blackberry. Fed by

fierce, rolling thunderstorms, pools of fresh water gathered in grassy hollows, quenching the little colony's thirst. Amid these remarkable sights was the strong, virile, ever-present inlet that fed the ecosystem with each ebb and flow.

Storms came often to the island, some quite violent. Harbingers of winter, the northeasters of autumn were the most spectacular. They brought sudden change among the wild creatures there. The first biting winds, angry clouds and ragged seas sent shorebirds south in noisy waves. Songbirds chattered together into little flocks and flew away to distant wintering grounds. As the inland waters cooled, saltwater fry swam from the great marsh nurseries of their birth, moving along the inlet's falling tide in compact schools to the open sea. Arriving waterfowl dodged and weaved down the north wind, pitching into ponds and open bays.

Winter was a wondrous time at the island. Marshes were alive with teal, black ducks, pintails, snipe and rail. On their southerly migrations, Monarch butterflies stopped to rest among the high dunes in stands of yaupon and wax myrtle. Oysters and mussels thrived in the rich backwater bogs of sand and peat. Fragrant, aromatic driftwood fed campfires and warmed spirits.

Serenity was the island's nature, but it was also primitive and not without occasional hazard to its guests. Wading in the shallows, one of my companions tangled suddenly with a giant stingray. Slinging its poisonous barb, the ray struck a vicious, painful blow to the man's leg, causing an urgent departure to shore and medical attention.

Gathering oysters in soft mud late one evening, another friend lost his footing and pitched forward. Thrusting his arm out to break the fall, his outstretched hand bore into a razor-sharp cluster, which ripped open his wrist. The grisly wound required a makeshift tourniquet and a harried trip by night to the mainland.

During August and September, sharks were quite common in the surf: spinners, bulls and hammerheads, for the most part. Wade fishing alone on the outer shoals, another companion was stalked unseen from behind by a monster blacktip that in mere seconds snatched away an entire stringer of reds and bluefish from a cord attached to his waist. Just by inches did my friend avoid a ghastly confrontation with the beast.

In time, change came to the island. Slowly at first, almost imperceptibly, the inlet began to move along its southerly axis, chewing into the island's northern tip, invading the maritime forest there. Dunes began a slow collapse into the roving current and as sand accrued, the once vibrant flow began to ebb. I saw this progression, and foolishly thought that somehow the process might abate, might reverse itself. But I knew the inlet never moved north, and indeed it became shallower with each passing month.

As the powerful flow diminished, the inlet's reach receded in kind, and yet another change was apparent. The ever-prolific marsh, static now and free from the inlet's sweep, stole out across the open water, reclaiming it with new growth. Shore birds came less each year, and many of the gorgeous pintails, wary black ducks and colorful teal, their potholes and bays now choked with grass, found other haunts. I knew then that it was only a matter of time before the inlet closed and passage to the island would be lost.

It was my last trip — one of those October afternoons when the sky is brilliant blue and the marsh a pungent gold that only autumn brings. I stowed my gear in the grove of trees that had sheltered me so many nights. The evening was cool with a hint of frost, and sunset came early. I sat very still up in the dunes at dusk and watched pelicans set their wings and sail without a sound right up beside me, just clearing the tops. Mourning doves flew over in twos and fives from the mainland to sleep in the oaks. Out on the surf, gulls wheeled and dove over a school of frantic baitfish.

Back at my camp, I looked out across the marsh at the old maritime forest and the slip of remaining inlet. A deep, reverent respect had grown in me for this place that had given me so much joy and whose ways I was only beginning to understand. Along the horizon, clouds billowed high in the western sky, silver and rose-tinged, catching the last rays of sunset. Reflections from the campfire danced among the deepening shadows. Little birds, wrens, sparrows and thrush fluttered in to roost around me. I stayed awake until the embers glowed their last lovely shades. Sleep came finally to the tide's peaceful rhythm and the songs of sea birds passing in the night.

If You Want To Go: The closure of Elmore's Inlet joined the two barrier islands of Lea and Hutaff. The area still provides a remarkable diversity of wildlife and remains home to birds, loggerhead turtles, fish, shellfish and a variety of small animals. Acres of tidal estuary comprise a teeming nursery. Shells abound on the beaches, especially after winter storms. To protect the island, cooperative agreements are in place with various organizations. During nesting season, some areas are off-limits. The island is best approached on high tide by shallow draft boat, canoe or kayak west from the Intracoastal Waterway or south by Rich's Inlet via Green's Channel. The remains of old camps and the maritime forest are tucked behind the dunes opposite Eddy Sound. There was a big crop of blackberries last year, and I hear the rabbits are back. Go find this unique coastal place if you dare — while you still can.

Robert Rehder writes from his home in Wilmington. His work has appeared in Wildlife in North Carolina, Quail Unlimited, *and* Our State Magazine.

The maritime forest on Hutaff looking back over Elmore's Inlet.

PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY ROBERT REHDER

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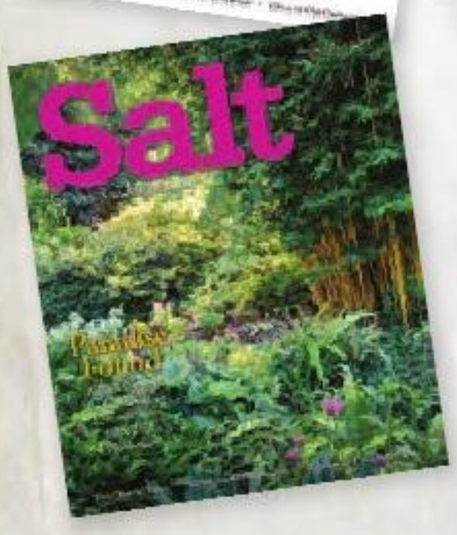

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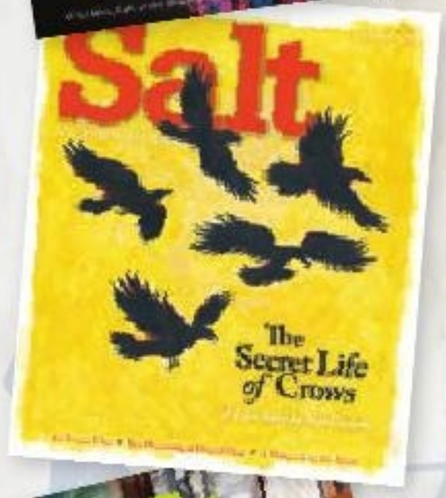

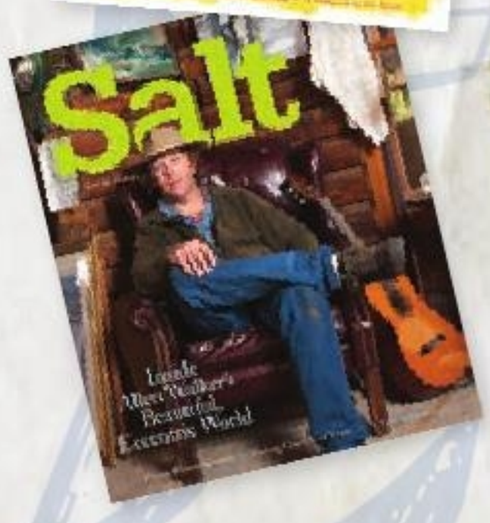

I'm Just Mad About Saffron

In defense of the pine trees' lusty dust

By Serena Brown

Am I the only person that loves our longleaf pollen season? I've observed that it's common practice among natives and newcomers alike to batten down the hatches at the first sight of spring's yellow mist. Every year I welcome the clouds of golden dust that billow around us. They seem to me to be a connection to the very soul of the place I call home – the North Carolina Sandhills. It's hard to live on the sandy soil of the Pine Barrens. This is palustris country. Once a year, no matter how we chop them down and mistreat them, the trees remind us that this is their domain.

Autumnal leaves aside, this is the first place I have lived where the trees throw a blanket over the land. It's a sort of fiesta of fecundity.

I realize that to people with allergies it's more akin to the dread simoom. By some strange coincidence I have developed a sinus infection while writing this month's column, so I am deeply sympathetic.

When we first came to this area we rented a house by Spring Valley Lake in Whispering Pines. Our new home was largely decorated in pale tones and I despaired of the landlady's sofa returning to its snow-white origins. I needn't have worried, the pollen washed right off. My husband, who grew up here in south central North Carolina, did mention that there might be a bit of pollen. He didn't say anything about a fog.

And so pollen season came our first year here. Our white house was washed yellow. The warm breezes carried waft after waft of fine gold dust. The puppy left clear paw prints in the sunbeam powder carpet. One afternoon I walked down to the dock and dived into the water. I emerged into a bolt of golden, liquid fabric. As I swam through the silken veil, it moved with me, creating ripple after ripple of yellow on the water's black depths. It was as though I were the sole worshipper in a spiritual celebration of water and pine. And so I fell in love with the falling breezes of ochre.

People often complain about the yellow coating their cars and houses. If they were living in London in April 2010 they would have been sweeping volcanic dust from the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull off their cars. That's a thoughtless windscreen wipe you only do once. At least pollen doesn't scrape glass. And it gives a reason to use the marvellous word Eyjafjallajökull in conversation.

According to the Internet – so it must be true – pine pollen is a potent mix of androgens and testosterone. Of course it is. It's a dust of tree lust. Apparently American Indians would eat it before going into battle. I've been looking into that; not because I want to eat it myself – though the omniscient Internet assures me that pine pollen is the next goji berry – but because I'd like to know what American Indian legends are attached to the golden pollen. I have made enquiries at The Museum of the Southeast American Indian at UNC Pembroke.

In the meantime I'll be making up my own stories. The doors and windows will be wide open for inspiration. I'll be the person wandering the countryside watching with joy as gold dust drifts across my path.

Serena Brown is a senior editor for Pinestraw *magazine in Southern Pines.*

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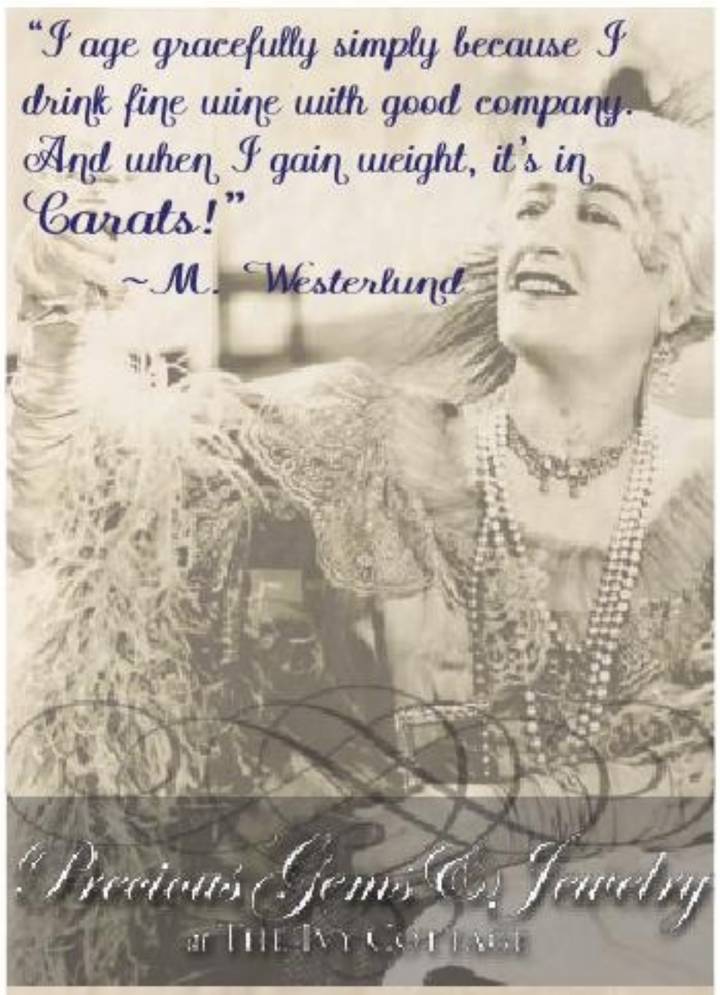
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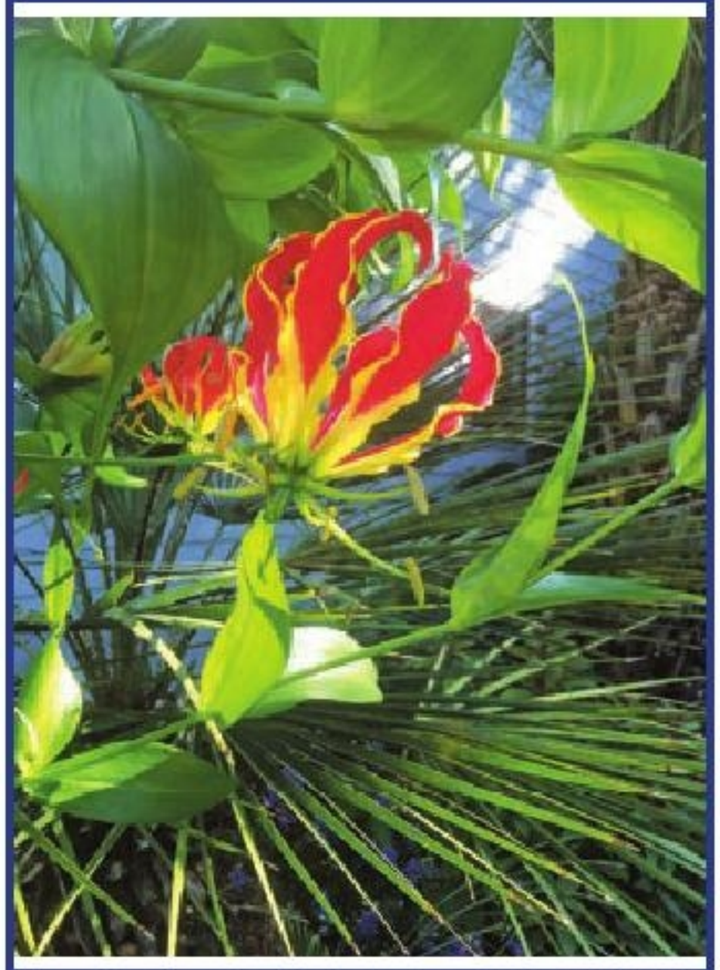

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Life & Home

Undone

Life gets messy. Same as a first draft. But it's all part of the beautiful process

By Wiley Cash

Our 17-month-old daughter, Early, has to be at school in half an hour, and I'm in charge. At the moment, she's wearing leather moccasins, sweat pants, a tie-dyed shirt, beads, and a headband bejeweled in bells, streamers and feathers. She looks like a flapper from the Roaring Twenties who's wandered into the Haight-Ashbury District in search of a gym. She's carrying my wife's purse around her neck, alternately stepping on the straps and getting her feet tangled in them. Snot gushes from both nostrils. It covers her cheeks, runs the risk of finding her hair. I've got a diaper bag over one shoulder and a tiny tin of goldfish crackers that are to be used only for emergencies. School now starts in twenty-five minutes. Did I mention that I'm in charge?

My wife, Mallory, picks up her camera, snaps a few pictures. She looks at me, smiles. I want to ask for her assistance in persuading Early to give up the purse, to request some extra muscle in wrangling her tiny but freakishly strong body into the car seat, but I can't. Mallory's pregnant, and I don't mean "great with child" pregnant. I mean "if I cough or sneeze or move the wrong way this baby may fall from my body" pregnant. She hasn't slept through the night in weeks. She hasn't been able to catch her breath for just as long. It's time I step in and take on some responsibility.

Also, I just finished my book and sent it to my editor, so now I don't have an excuse.

Sending Early to school was my idea anyway. It's not real school, but a once-a-week "baby and me" class where parents convene for forty-five minutes in a Montessori setting to beseech the teacher for tips and advice while their toddlers summarily destroy the well-organized classroom. I attended the first class, and then I missed the next three classes because I was finishing a novel already way over deadline, like, years over deadline. When I began writing it five years ago we lived in West Virginia. During these five years we've moved home to North Carolina, given birth to a daughter, and are now expecting another little girl any day. I often found myself moody, distant, or preoccupied with the story in my head while real life unfolded all around me. To create a fictional world that feels real enough to be sustained for the years of its creation is to constantly find yourself with one foot on earth and one foot in the miasma of creation.

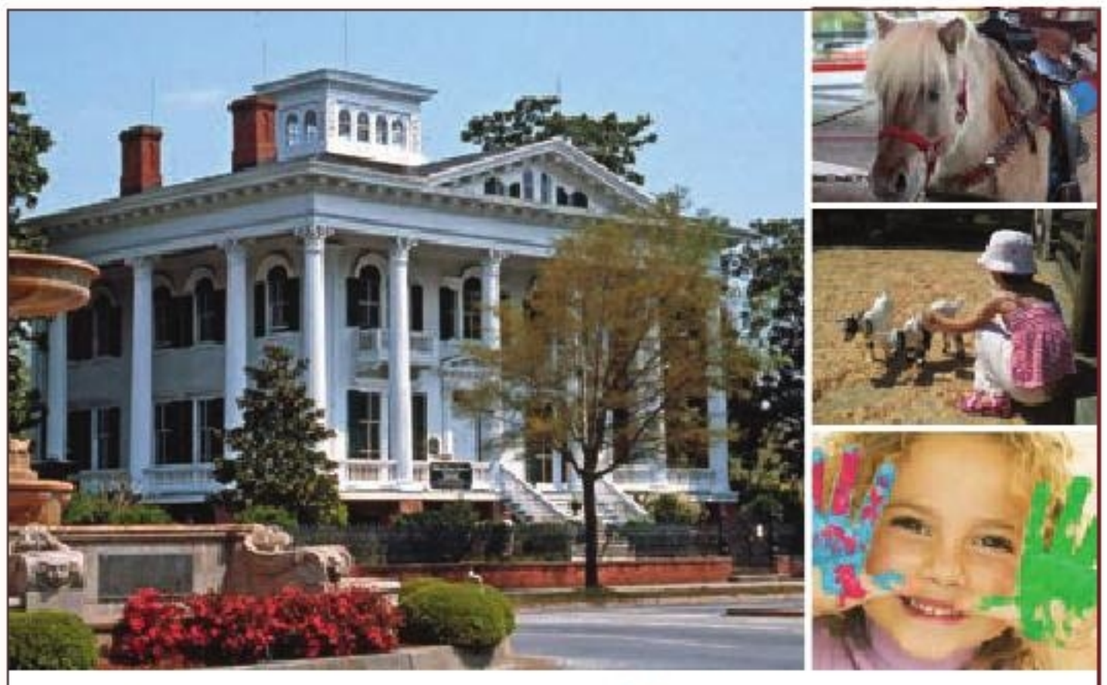
All that is behind me now, at least until I start another book. As I take hold of Early's hand and lead her through the foyer to the front door, I think back on what it was like to submit the manuscripts of my first and second novels to my editor. On the night I finished *A Land More Kind Than Home* in the fall of 2008, I joined friends for dinner at an Indian restaurant in Pittsburgh. The night was warm and clear, and I remember the freedom I felt once the thing that had taken so much of my time over the past several years was finally off my desk. When I finished *This Dark Road to Mercy* in the spring of 2013, Mallory and I went on a long bike ride along the Monongahela River in Morgantown, West Virginia. Now, having finished what I believe to be a novel that is better written and better told than my first two, I am on my way out the door to "school" with a toddler I've already proven incapable of dressing and de-snotting.

But as I strap Early into her car seat and leave the tin of goldfish crackers in easy reach should either of us find ourselves in an emergency, I recall something very important about my first two novels and the memories I have of them being "finished": They weren't really finished. Both novels were returned with heavy edits. Hundreds of pages were cut or added or rearranged before the novels were accepted by my editor and scheduled for publication. Now, a sick feeling passes through my body, followed by a cold sweat. I'm not done with this novel either. I've submitted a full draft to my editor, but there's no reason to believe that it won't be sent back to me. There's no reason to believe that hundreds of pages won't be cut or added or rearranged.

I climb into the driver's seat and buckle my seat belt. I adjust my rear-view mirror so that I can see Early's face where she looks at me from her own mirror that hangs in the middle of the back seat. She smiles, the blue feather from her headband dusting her blue eyes. She is an angel, an angel covered in snot whose wardrobe was of her father's making. That's OK. Today is a draft, a complete draft, but a draft nonetheless. Next week will be tighter, more coordinated, less snotty. Next week, when I get another chance, I'll get it right.

Wiley Cash is a New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released last year. He lives in Wilmington.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MALLORY BRADY CASH



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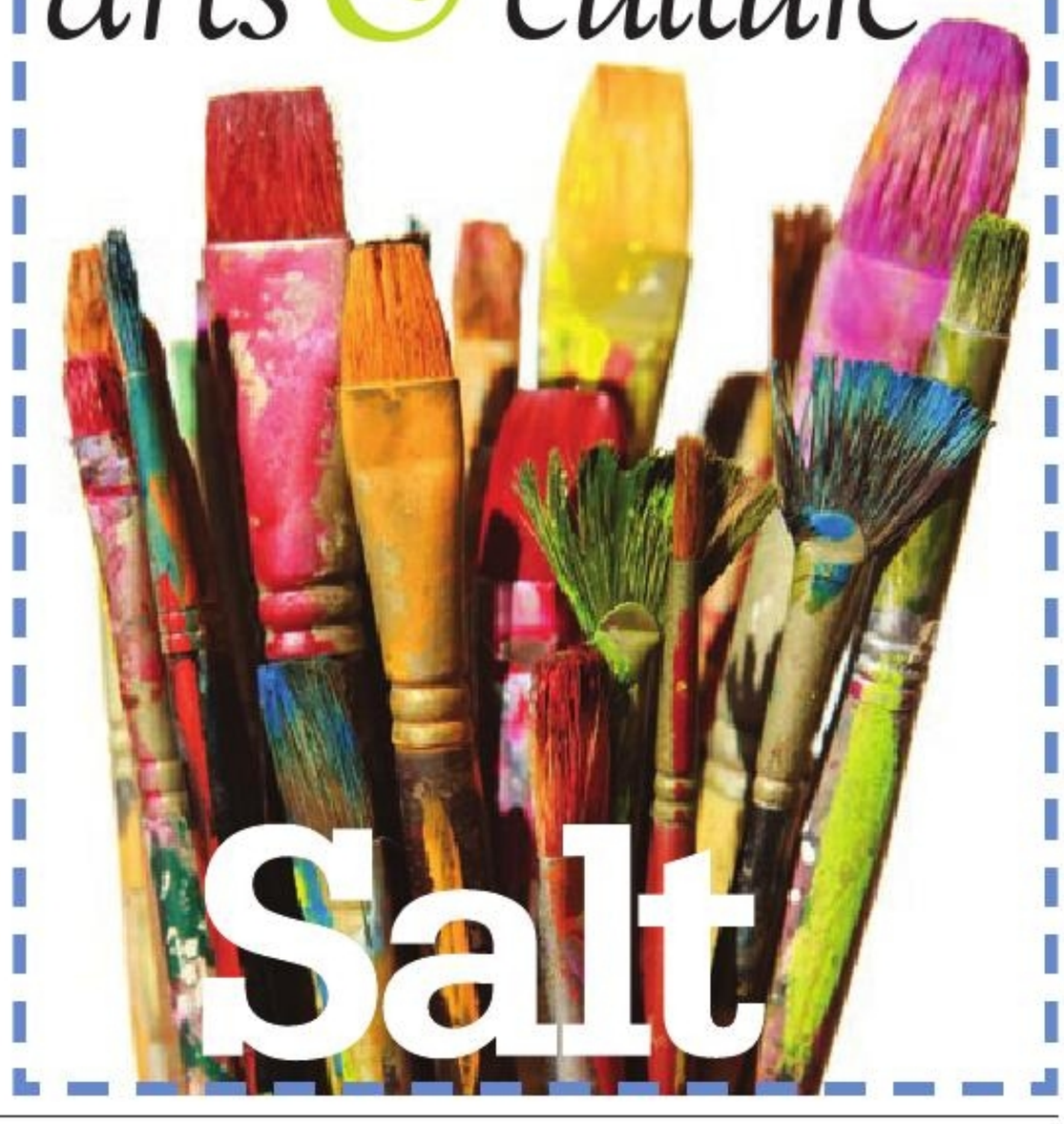

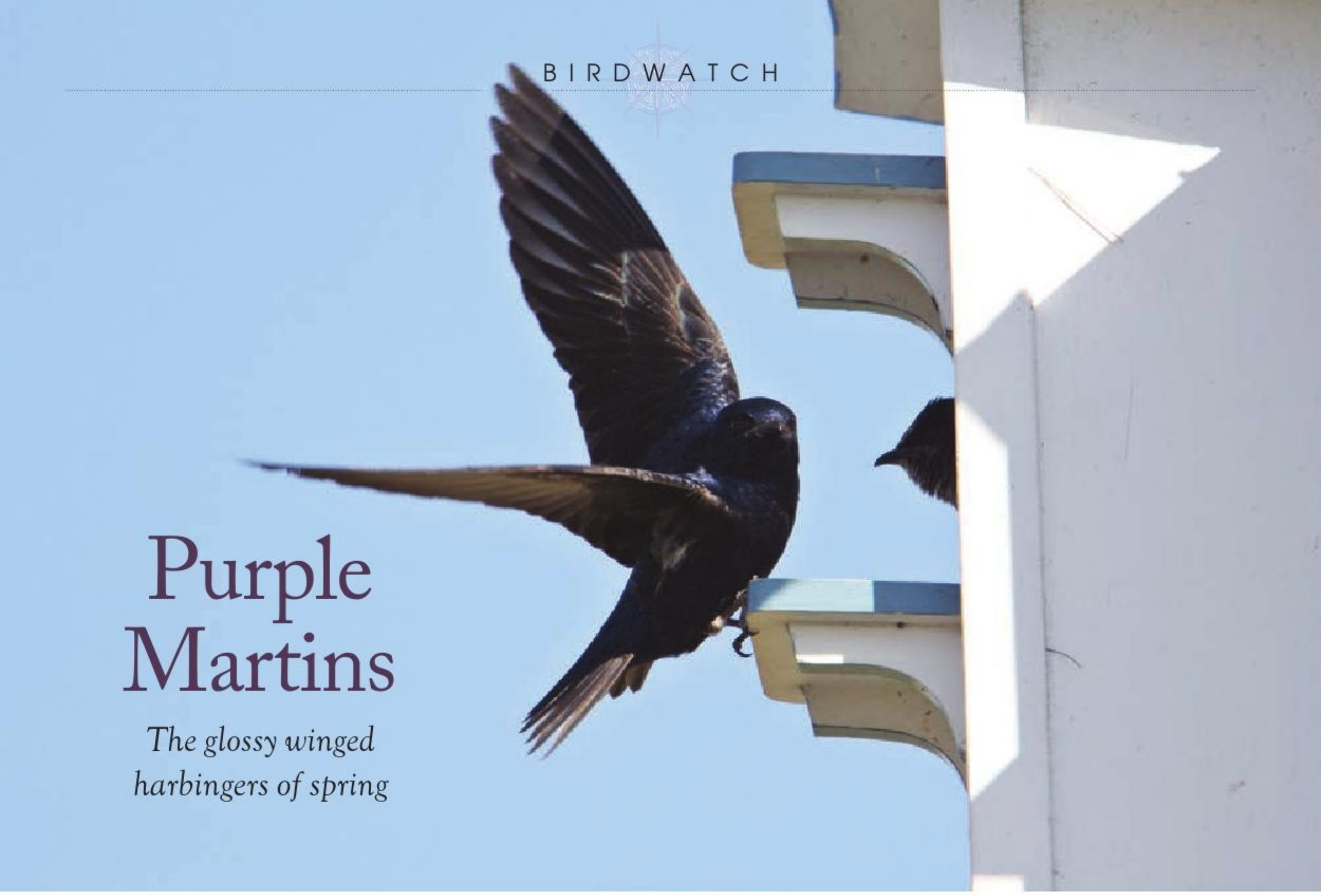

Purple Martins

The glossy winged harbingers of spring

By Susan Campbell

For many bird enthusiasts, spring hasn't arrived until the purple martin has returned. Unique twangy vocalizations, high-flying acrobatics and glossy plumage make these birds easy to identify from other members of the swallow family. But it is the species' affinity with artificial housing that endears them to thousands of martin landlords across the United States.

East of the Rocky Mountains, purple martins are completely dependent on gourds and multi-family housing to raise their annual broods. Martin pairs may take up residence in close quarters with anywhere from a few to dozens of others during May and June. Established colonies have been known to include a hundred or more adults if space is available. In prime habitat, less experienced birds may delay breeding until a vacancy in housing occurs.

Martins return to North Carolina from wintering grounds in Brazil by late March, although individuals scouts may be seen as early as late February. Experienced adults are paired for the season by early April, and both male and female share nest-building duties, making nests of pine needles and leaves. The female lays five to seven eggs and incubates them for about two weeks. After hatching, young are fed by both parents for up to one month before they are strong enough to leave the nest. They remain associated as a family group with each other as well as their neighbors in the colony until late July. Then, the martins begin their journey southward for the winter.

During warm months, purple martins are found where large flying insects are plentiful – usually close to water given that dragonflies and damselflies are among their favorite prey. For many years it was erroneously believed that martins were an ideal form of mosquito control, although recent research has debunked this myth. Maneuvering to catch such tiny prey has virtually no energetic benefit. Plus, martins actively feed at high altitudes well above mosquito habitat. And peak foraging occurs midday – not at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.

Martins can be attracted to new housing if it is properly situated. The birds need lots of room to soar and maneuver adjacent to their home, typically an open location at least 30 feet from human housing and 60 feet from the nearest tall trees (the farther, the better!). The gourds or house should be 10- to 20-feet high and clear of any bushes, shrubs or vines. Open areas around the pole and housing will reduce the likelihood of predation by mammals or climbing snakes. Once a few pairs of martins are successful breeding in a new location, they will not only become very site faithful but attract other individuals as well. Indeed, countless people each year find that providing for purple martins and sharing in their summertime activities is the ultimate backyard birding pursuit.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com.

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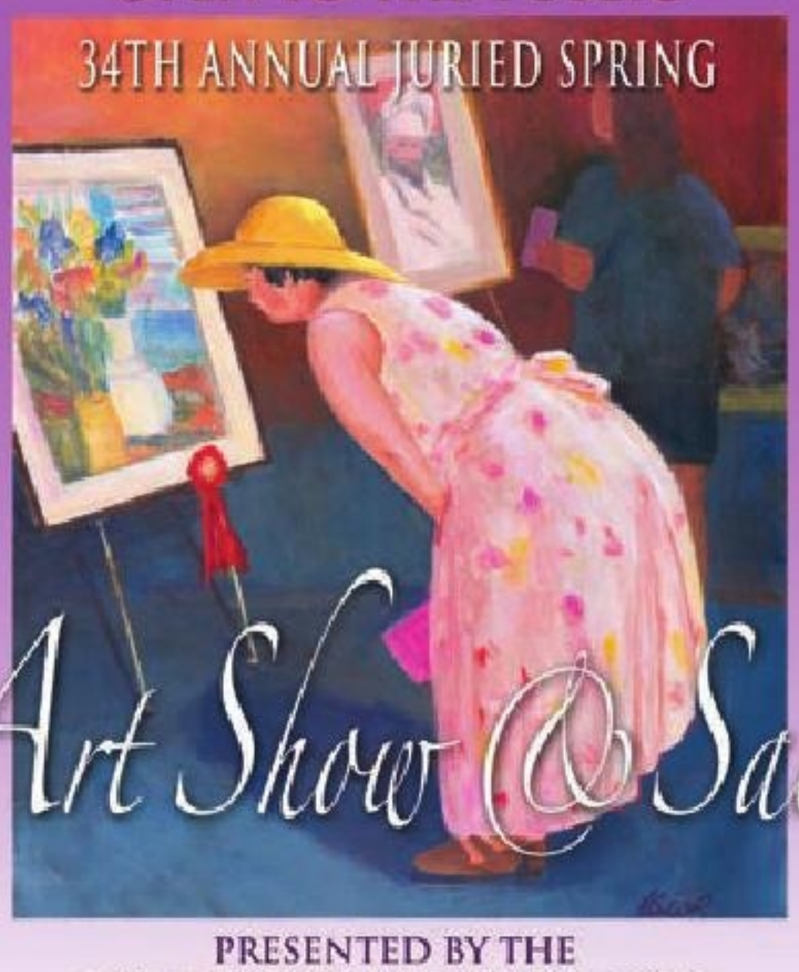

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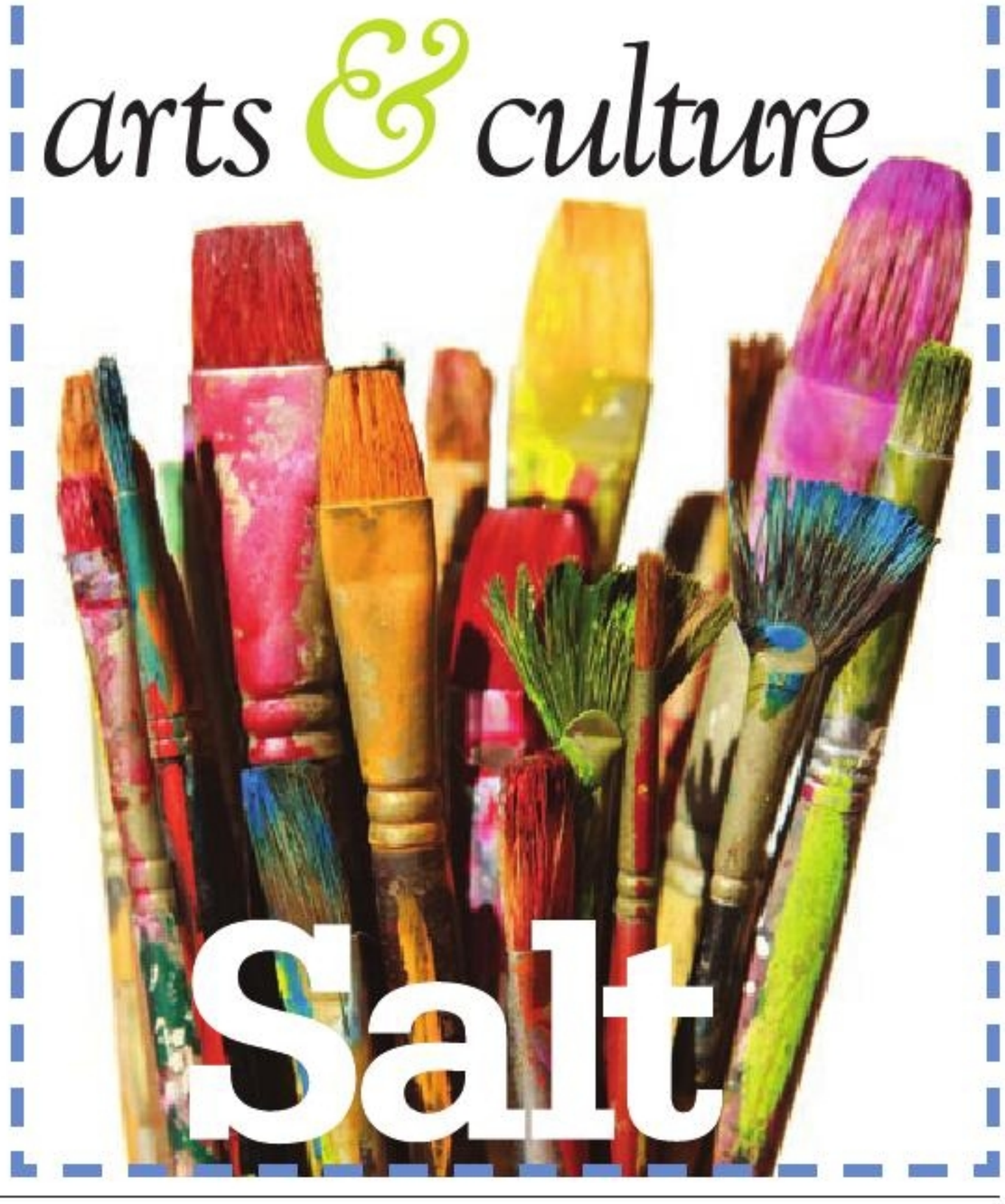


Lifting the Veil

Everything you ever wanted to know about Spanish moss

By Virginia Holman

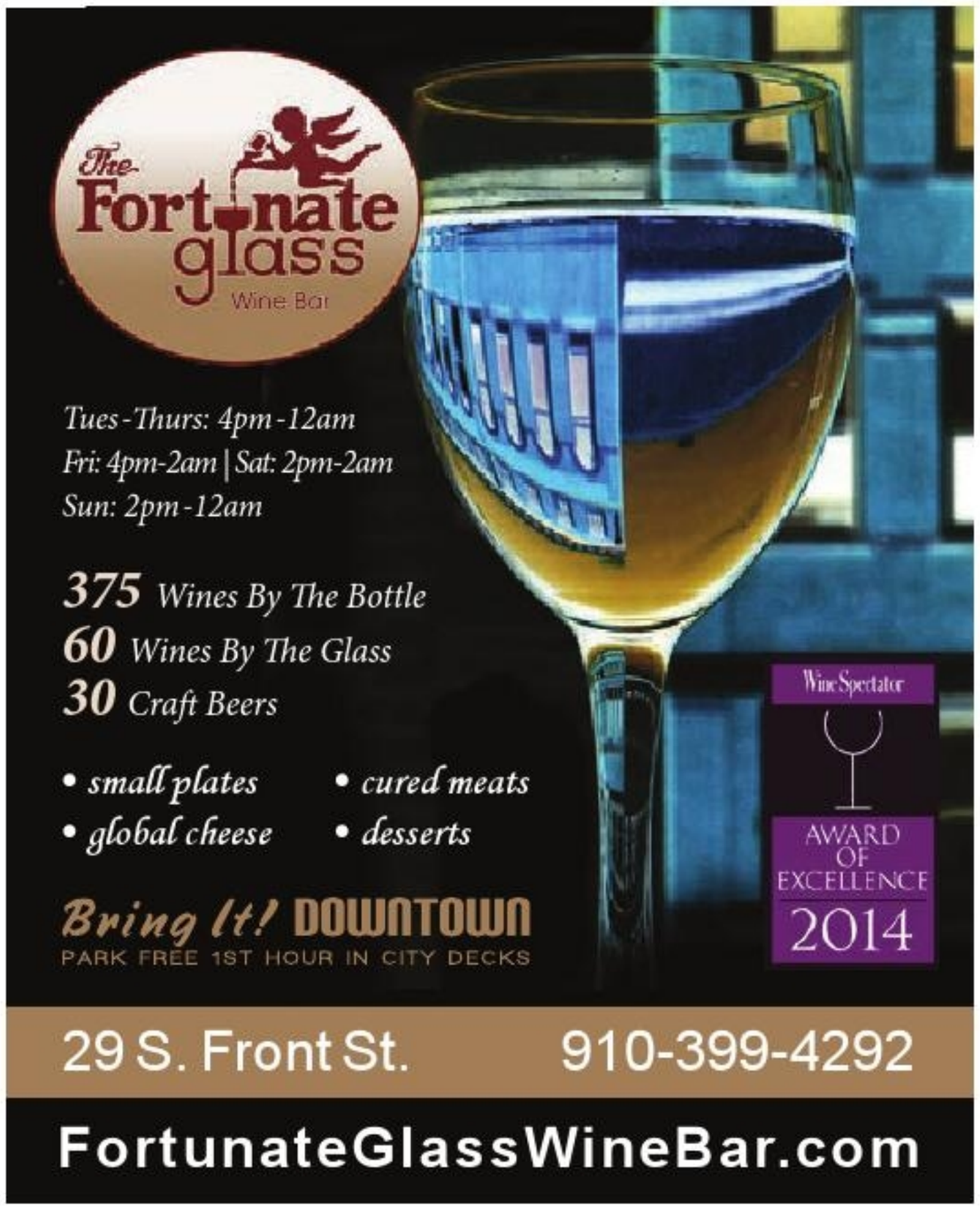
Though the live oak is arguably the official tree of Wilmington, our wide-canopied, gnarled live oaks would seem less majestic, less ancestral, were they unadorned by the swaying silver strands of *Tillandsia usneoides*, commonly known as Spanish moss.

This moniker, like many nicknames, is the result of a bit of trash talk. Spanish conquistadors, who must have been cranky given the weight of their armor and the lack of sixteenth-century air-conditioning, derided this lovely plant (and France) by dubbing it *Cabello Francés* (French hair). French explorers, not to be outdone, called the plant *Barbe Espagnol* (Spanish beard). Over time, this evolved into Spanish moss. (The Native Americans, with whom the French and Spanish traded, had already named it aptly "the hair of the trees.")

Its botanical name originates in Linnaean taxonomy, and it too has a backstory. When Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus began his system of plant nomenclature, it was not without whimsy. *Tillandsia usneoides* is named for professor Elias Tillands, a contemporary of Linnaeus' who as a student once became so violently seasick on a crossing from Sweden to Finland that he refused to return by ship. Instead, Tillands returned to Sweden on foot, a walk of nearly 1,000 miles. Since it appeared to Linnaeus (quite incorrectly, it turns out) that the strands of Spanish moss shed water much like wool, he named it after his colleague. The name is also a bit of a pun: *Tillands* roughly translates as "over land." *Usneoides* means that the plant looks like *Usnea*, a lichen commonly known as old man's beard.

Though thick, hypnotic swags of Spanish moss often appear to shroud a tree, it is not harmful. Instead of behaving like a parasite, which takes its nutrients from a host plant, Spanish moss is an epiphyte in the bromeliad family. It is an "air plant"; the tree is simply its perch. Spanish moss adheres to bark with tiny scales known as trichomes. These scales, which cover the silver threads of Spanish moss, also aid in water collection and transpiration. They do a remarkable job — Spanish moss can hold nearly ten times its weight in rainwater. These trichomes are highly effective during

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN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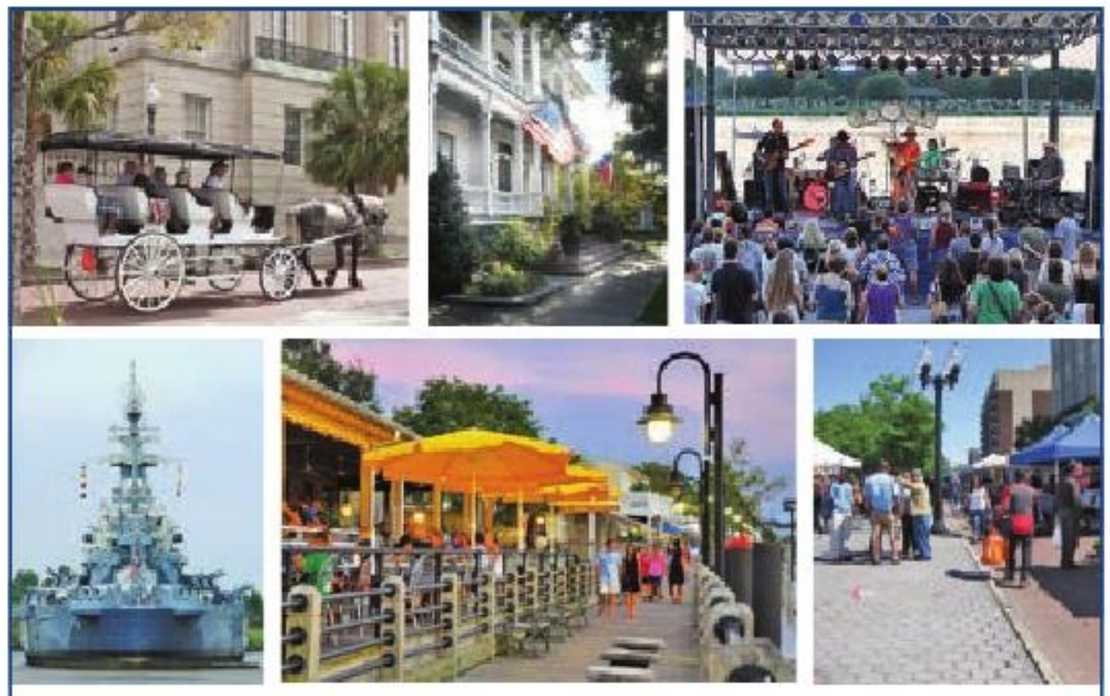
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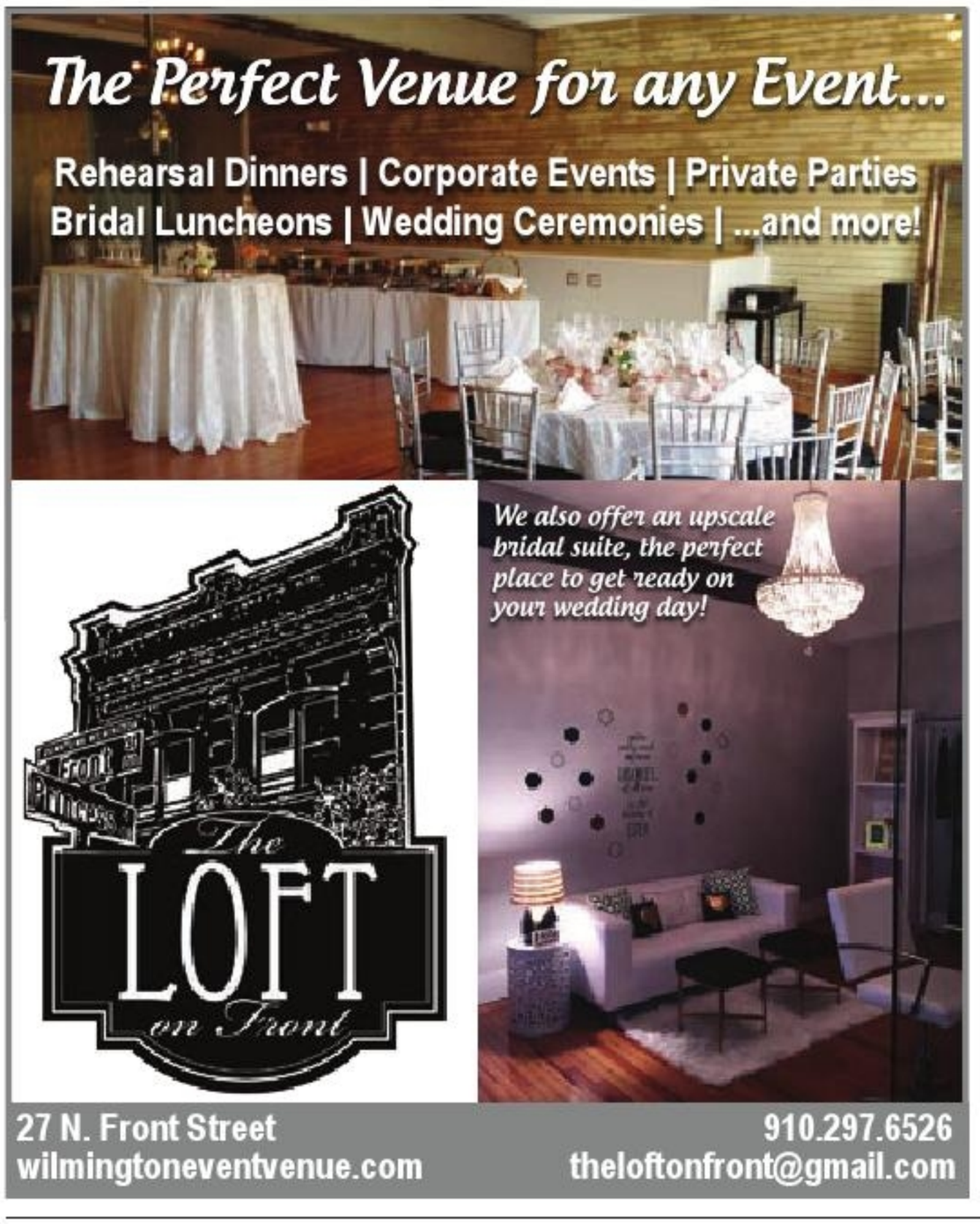
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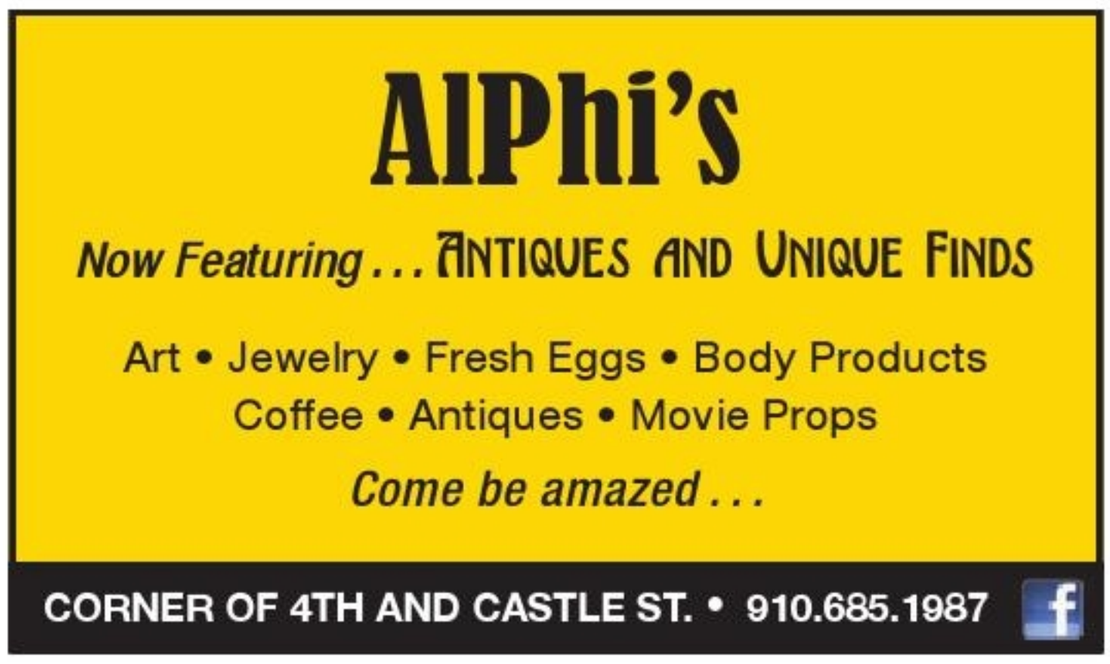
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drought as well, allowing Spanish moss to scavenge sustenance from fog and dust, bits of decaying matter, and even bird droppings.

Spanish moss was once so abundant in the South it was used to stuff everything from voodoo dolls to chaises longues to mattresses. The harvesting and production of Spanish moss became a substantial industry. Commercially, the plant became known as "vegetable horsehair." In order to make it suitable for stuffing, factory workers washed the moss to kill off any bugs and mold spores. Then it was left to dry in the sun. In this state, the moss was highly flammable. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Cleaveland Fibre Factory of Jacksonville, Florida, set off one of the worst urban fires in our national history. Embers from a chimney ignited several piles of dried moss. Soon, the factory was an inferno.

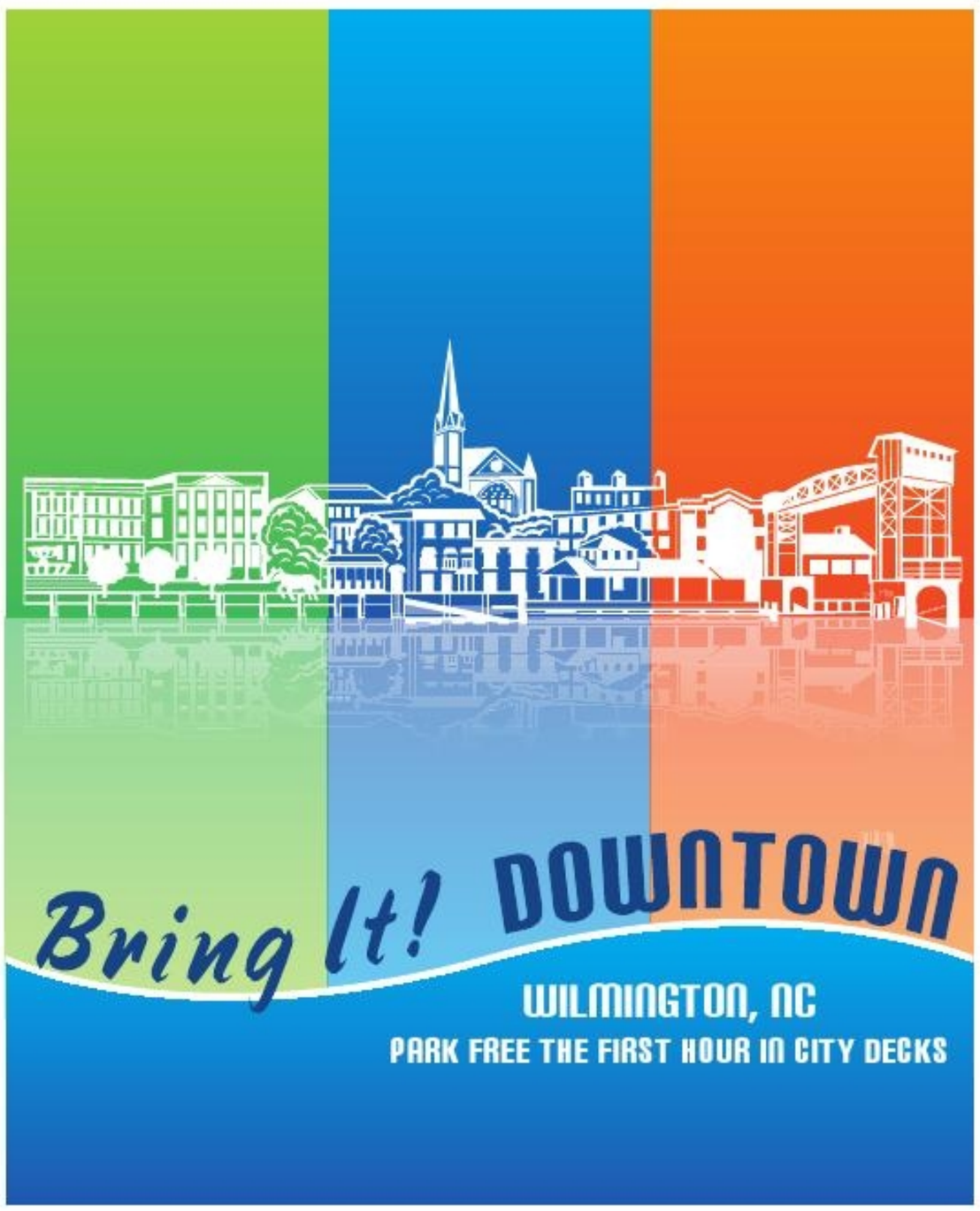
In *Acres of Ashes*, a lengthy first-person account of the great fire of 1901, Benjamin Harrison wrote that the factory was engulfed quickly, and the roof collapsed. Then, "from the glowing depths of the unroofed factory, masses of flaming moss rose high and were carried over the city in every direction by eddies or far to the east by the breeze. They fell on the shingle roofs surrounding the fire limit, in backyards, and they drifted through open windows and against curtains that dallied in the wind." The dry pitch pine roofs of a neighboring shantytown quickly ignited and soon the flames spread throughout Jacksonville. The fire was so ferocious that it soon created its own weather: Winds whipped through the town, and the intense heat caused a waterspout to form in the St. Johns River. In the span of only eight hours, the fire consumed nearly 2,368 buildings and 146 blocks. Ten thousand people were left homeless. Numerous accounts claim a glowing orange nimbus of smoke and flame could be seen on the horizon in Savannah, Georgia, and, rather improbably, as far north as Raleigh. Miraculously, only seven people perished.

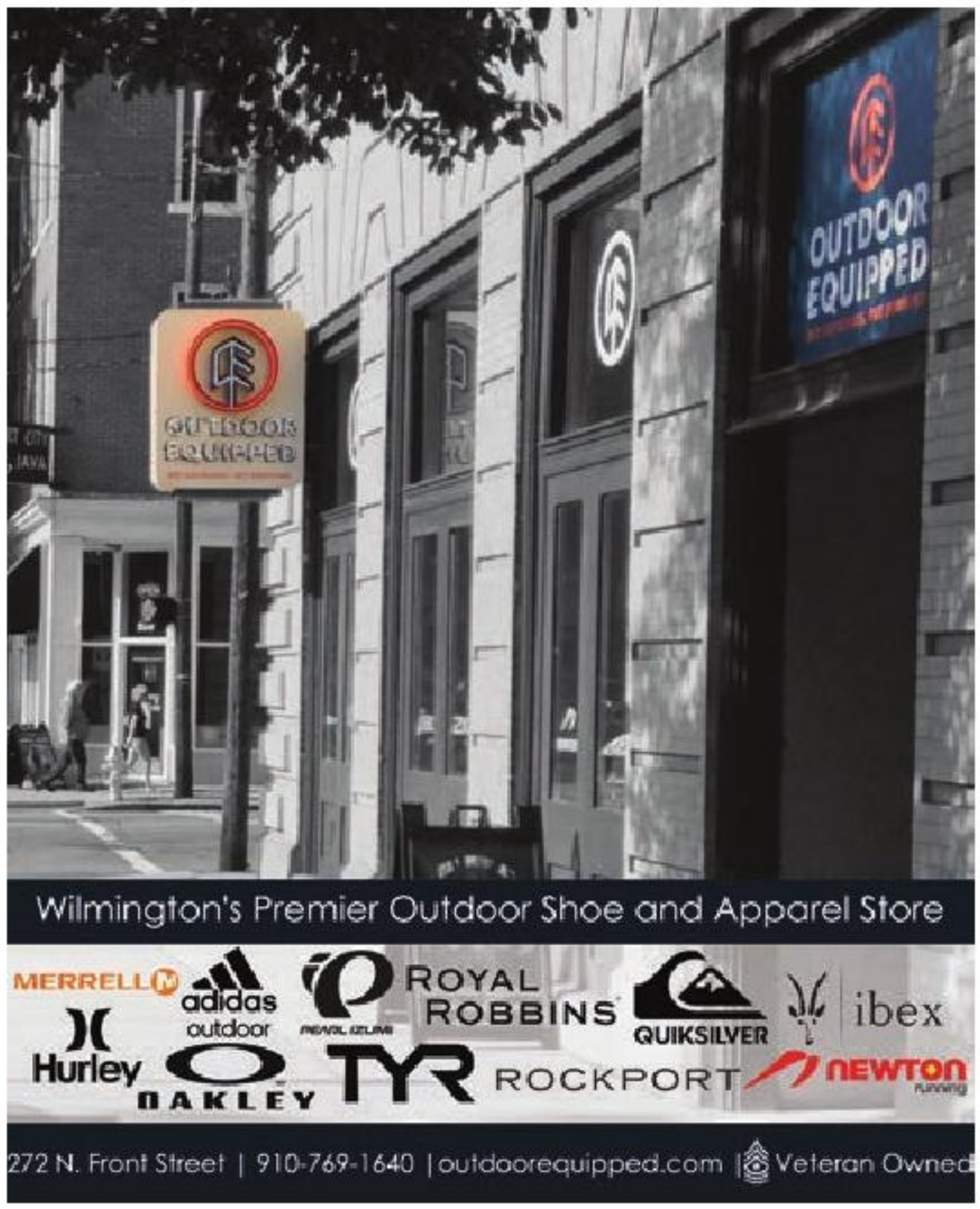
Like a gauzy curtain that stirs with the breeze . . .

Thick beards of Spanish moss can also house everything from bats, frogs, lizards and snakes, which might give one pause before grabbing a handful. Most interestingly, a jumping spider, *Pelegrina tillandsiae*, is found almost exclusively in Spanish moss. Though people often say that chiggers dwell in Spanish moss, this tends to be true only of gathered moss that has touched the ground. Surprisingly, Spanish moss also blossoms with tiny flowers, and it's said that on late spring nights, festoons of blossoming moss perfume the air.

So the next time you're driving down Market Street or gathering beneath the branches of the Airlie oak, look up and marvel. Spanish moss is a fascinating inheritance rich with history and biological wonders. Like a gauzy curtain that stirs with the breeze, it lends our area a bit of mystery.

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.





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green and whole and nibble
the stalk as afterthought.
Carrots, peas, pole beans.
Nothing stands a chance
when they tuck their white bibs,
follow their noses
and lick their lips
not waiting at the table.

—*Ruth Moose*

Advice from Mama Goodmanners

By Celia Rivenbark

In the spirit of April Fools' — and to remedy the palpable desperation pulsing through a handful of letters from readers seeking authentic social guidance — we asked the ever tasteful Celia Rivenbark to channel advice from Mama Goodmanners, an imperious woman of a certain age (but not too old) who isn't afraid to serve it raw, so to speak. We found her advice most helpful. Hope you will too.

Dear Mama Goodmanners,

I have spent many years faithfully sending birthday gifts to my niece and nephew and they never bother to thank me in writing or in person. They are otherwise quite lovely people. How can I move past this and not be angry about this etiquette lapse?

Signed,
Aunt Fran-tic

Dear Clueless AF:

The kids will know what that means . . . Ahem. Anyway, your phrase "They are otherwise quite lovely people" is rather like Jeffrey Dahmer's relatives referring to him as "a likable chap except for all the decapitations and whatnot." Of course, I exaggerate for effect. I don't honestly believe that your niece and nephew's transgressions equate to a serial killer with a standing Kenmore full of body parts. No, no. But it is a close second in my estimation. Please save yourself further stress by donating the amount you would have given to these millennial brats to a respectable charity. This will assure you that you will not only get a thank-you in the mail, but you will also spend many, many hours opening subsequent mailings asking for more gifts and answering many telemarketing calls to ostensibly "thank you again for that generous gift."

Mama G

Dear Mama Goodmanners,

I enjoy hosting the occasional dinner party, but I wish that more guests would recognize when it's time to call it a night and just go home. Is there a polite way to encourage them to either help clean up or say goodnight when the hour is late and the party is clearly winding down?

Dear GrowAPair,

Yes, yes, I know you signed your original silly-ass question "Kerflummoxed in Kure," but I changed it just a little. In other words, I took control. Just as you should do in the case of the lingering guests who hate depriving you of their delightful company. Unless you want to stop hosting parties altogether — which, up side, leaves you time to binge-watch *The Affair* in your monkey-face pajamas whilst eating anything without kale, praise Jesus — you should be prepared to risk hurt feelings. You hinted at "helping clean up." Let me tell you, if I ever go to a party and the host hands me a Swiffer WetJet and tells me, "Rosaria doesn't come until a week from Tuesday so hop to it," I can assure you I will never go back. I believe my work here is done.

Mama G

Dear Mama Goodmanners,

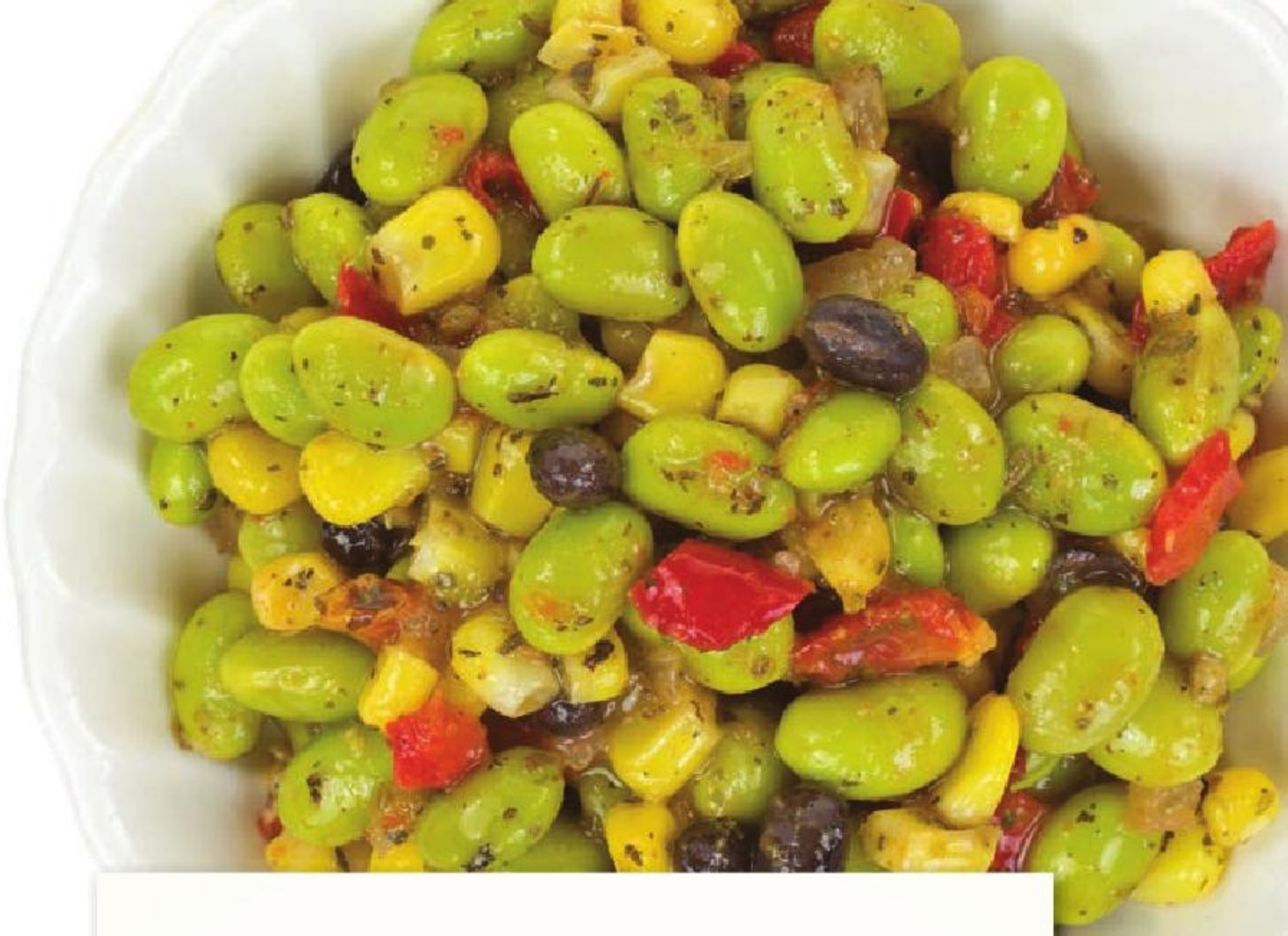
My next-door neighbors leave their Christmas lights up and ablaze well into the spring every year. And while they did move the inflatable Rudolph and Santa diorama to their backyard at my insistence, the lights remain on bushes, railings and the entire roofline. Can you advise a polite way to encourage them to take it all down by January 6? I'm afraid I'm going to have an Epiphany of my own that involves calling the authorities.

Signed,
Blinded by the Light(s)

Dear Springsteen fan,

Sorry, your signature gave me a little thrill as I recalled hours in my youth spent pondering how one does, in essence, become "wrapped up like a douche, another runner in the night." But enough about me! Your question is actually one that I have fielded many times over the years. The answer is very simple: You must move. You must move to an area that is filled with people just like yourself. People who know that the true spirit of Christmas dies immediately after the first week of January and must not ever, EVER, return until somewhere around mid-October. Just kidding! Of course you shouldn't have to leave your home, which I'm sure, is decorated impeccably thanks to the free services of the Pottery Barn design team, but there is really nothing you can do to regulate someone else's taste or lack thereof. Yep, I was right the first time. You should move.

Mama G



Dear Mama Goodmanners,

What's the best way to respond when a friend invites you, repeatedly, to attend services with them at their (wackadoodle) church?

Signed,
No Snakes, please

Dear First Prez,

Just taking a wild guess. OK, as a proud and devout member of the Fire-Baptized First Church of the Wackadoodle, I encourage you to expand your mind and your circle of friends and actually go with them one Sunday (or, Tuesday afternoon, if it's truly wackadoodle). What's the worst that can happen? You won't be asked to drink strychnine (I don't think, anyway), and you'll have a good story to share when your mainstream church has its inevitable potluck dinner. Imagine how they will hang on your every word as they suck on edamame pods blanched in snob juice. There. All better now?

Mama G

Dear Mama Goodmanners,

Family dinners have become a huge challenge at our house. My father-in-law chews with his mouth open, belches and moans like a lovesick bull when he's really enjoying the meal. Last Easter, he even loudly passed gas while leaning over to grab the last yeast roll! We're used to this behavior, as abysmal as it is, but my son wants to bring his very well-bred, First Family of Virginia-type fiancée to meet the family and I'm already dreading dinner with "Dad." Advice, please!

Worried in Wrightsville

Dear Pull My Finger,

Sorry, "Worried." As I was reading your letter, I had a flash-back to a beloved uncle's Thanksgiving dinner hijinks in my childhood. Sure, it was on the level of a third-grade boy but, trust me, you'll miss it when it's gone. I mean, really, a properly executed "pull my finger" is almost extinct these days. That said, you are right to be concerned. We can't have the future fiancée be confronted with such an awesomely awful array of dinnertime tics. Has "Dad" been tested for Tourette's? Does he sputter, fart and carry on anywhere else, or does he just save this behavior for the dinner table under the guise of "making memories"? Either way, until she's married into the fam, keep these two far apart. I hate to brag (unless I'm awake), but I'm also FFV and I can assure you that if I had dinner with "Dad" and he broke wind in my face over a cloverleaf roll, I'd be outta there like my clothes were on fire.

Mama G

Dear Mama Goodmanners,

When are you really, honestly, truly too old to wear a mini-skirt?

Signed,
Bambi, Tiffany & Dawn

Dear Strippers,

Well, this is a bit of a loaded question in this day and age when everyone insists that "age is just a number," "you're as young as you feel" and "long hair can be worn at any age; look at Gwyneth Paltrow, she's at least 60."

OK, no, she's not but she's too old for that "haint" hair, as my Aunt Sudavee used to call it. Aunt Sudavee hated for a woman past 30 or so to have long hair. She also didn't like it when grown women left home without lipstick. "Put some color on," she'd always say.

That said, it's possible that on fashion matters, Aunt Sudavee can't really be considered reliable, given her propensity to shop at the "Forlorn & Neglected" selection of culottes and big, boxy tops at Kohl's using her Kohl's cash. Which, turns out, isn't good anywhere else. Just try using it to pay your cable bill.

Oh, forgive my silliness. It's just that I have a neighbor who is 57 and looks great in her vintage leather mini WITH TIGHTS. That's the only way it's acceptable at our, er, her age. I think the mini-skirt age cut-off should be around 40, and then only if you have beautiful bare legs. Even then, it's a good idea to restrict the wearing of mini-skirts to beach or nightclub. And, for God's sake, put some color on.

Mama G

Mama Goodmanners lives in Wilmington, where she works toward creating a just, verdant and more peaceful world and, on occasion, enjoys midget wrestling shows at Ziggy's.

Sick of Stupid

A few moments with comedian Cliff Cash

By Jason Frye · Photograph by Mark Steelman

For the last five minutes, Cliff Cash and I have been talking about the Ku Klux Klan. Loudly. In public.

I guess some people look at us — sandy-haired white men with beards, one of us in a checked shirt, the other in a hoodie advertising a barbecue joint — and think, "Rednecks," not knowing the history of their pejorative (a story for another day) or the context of our conversation. Or why our Klan discussion is so damn funny.

Let me start by saying this: Cliff Cash doesn't play it safe. As a standup comic, he can't because the funniest moments reside on the bleeding edge between the tragic and the laughable, and this is where he's most comfortable.

Which explains why he brought up the Klan over lunch.

"I've been working on something new," he tells me. "It's close, almost there."

And he launches into his bit. I won't spoil it, but the gist is this: It's Klan meeting day and one member is all out of white sheets. Hilarity ensues.

As he goes through the bit, his eyes light up and he gestures with his fork. His voice goes between the two characters in the bit — the hopeless, dirty-sheeted Klansman and his starched-white brethren — and a softer version of his performing voice. The joke builds, first the setup, the absurd twist, funny bit, funny bit, punch line, tag.

"It's funny, right?" he asks. "I think the funniest bit is that tag."

He repeats the tag, that last little phrase tacked on at the end to squeeze another laugh out of the audience and reveal another layer to the joke. He's right, the punch line is good, the tag is better.

"For some reason the tag's not working."

He gets another forkful of chicken curry, and I replay his tableside rendition of the bit in my head.

"How long's the pause?" I ask. "How long are you waiting between the punch line and the tag?

"I let the laugh die down then I hit the tag," he says.

"What if you give it a second? Deliver the punch line, let them laugh, then give them a second or two of quiet before you bring in the tag. Let them digest the joke before you get back into it."

"You know," he says, "depends on the audience, but that just might work."

This is Cash's process in joke writing and bit development. He finds something funny, adds to it, then adds a little more to make it something greater than one line and a giggle. He tests bits out on his wife and on friends, calls

his brother — novelist and fellow *Salt* writer Wiley Cash — and talks through it, perfecting it as he goes.

"My best friend, man, he's like the anti-me: med school, smart financial decisions, good plan for the future. But he's so funny. He's like my straight man. When he calls and tells me a story about being single or going out on a date or goes on about something uptight he did, I just roll with it. It's very much two friends trying to make each other laugh."

Writing jokes and being a national touring comic on the rise takes much more discipline than this. Making your best friend or brother laugh is one thing; turning it into a career is another thing entirely.

I mentioned earlier that Cash doesn't play it safe, and that's evident in his career, but it's in this space between reality and the absurdity of it all that he thrives.

"The hardest joke to tell is about something heavy. Farts, they're already funny; global warming, not funny. I try to find the humor in the heaviness. Those are the jokes that are the most challenging to write but also the most rewarding to tell and to hear."

Joking about the hard things is the focus of Cash's latest project, the Sick of Stupid Comedy Tour. He's doing it with two veteran comics, Tom Simmons and Stuart Huff.

"A lot of iconic Southern comedy is silly. It just perpetuates stereotypes that Southerners have — for generations — tried to shake off. We — Tom, Stuart and I — believe there's a place for that, but we also think there's a place for progressive, intelligent, informed humor with a Southern sensibility," says Cash.

The moniker Sick of Stupid serves to describe not only Cash, Huff and Simmons, but also the types of crowds they draw. And then there's the obvious S.O.S. reference in play, and I happen to think Cash is right: It's time to shrug off the mantle of the old Southern stereotype and reveal the face of the new South. It's a face that can be as sophisticated and refined, as intellectual and thought-provoking as you'll find in the U.S. You can already see this shift in food, but it's time for the other corners of popular culture — from comedy to TV to literature — to catch up.

"We wanted to fill a room with like-minded Southerners, the ones who wouldn't boo a gay rights bit."

Rather than seeing a comic mincing across the stage speaking with an outrageous lisp and finally dropping the charade before making his point, at Sick of Stupid you'll find smart jokes that often touch on three, four or even five issues in a telling.

Take another of Cash's jokes. In it, he's on stage in character, proclaiming President Obama is a secret Muslim terrorist communist socialist who wants to steal our guns, melt them down and make gay wedding rings. There's much more to the joke, and in all the tellings of it, Cash has developed a piece that hits on everything from the racial tensions arising from the election of our first African-American president to Islamophobia to homophobia to gun rights. And it's a smart bit. (I highly recommend attending a live show in hopes he performs all or part of it, or, at the very least, finding early iterations of it on YouTube.)

"There are some places where I can't do my material. That's true of a lot of comics. In some rooms you can do your jokes, but there may be consequences."

Consequences can mean anything from heckling to not being asked back to perform at a club or venue to things far worse. Stuart Huff, Cash says, has been "punched twice, once pretty seriously, and then someone shit on his car." As for Cash, he's dealt with hecklers and a gentleman in a comedy club who'd had too much to drink and very much wanted to share his chicken wings with the still-performing comic. It's a good story.

"What we want to do with Sick of Stupid, and what we've been able to accomplish so far, is to be funny and be as P.C. as possible without infringing on the artistry."

Comedy, at its roots, is just good storytelling, and Cash isn't the only good storyteller in his family.

"My brother, man, Wiley's one of my best friends. We were each other's best men. He's one of the few people I trust to turn to when I'm working on something new."

"I'm proud of his books and his success. Seeing him do so well, it inspires me. Too many of us have a dream and we go for it, but not all the way. Wiley, though, wow, to see him work so hard and sell his first novel, it showed me what can happen when you don't give up. I think about it all the time when I'm working on material."

To hear him talk, you'd think sibling rivalry was dead between these two. That's not the case. Cash says of his brother, "He's one of the funniest guys I know. In fact, the first time he met my wife, he went up to her and said, 'I'm Wiley; I'm the funny one.'"

But the two have talked about doing a collaborative project.

"I'm a decent enough writer but I don't have the discipline to write a book. And I guess I'm glad Wiley doesn't want to do standup. We've always talked about working together on something that works with our strengths. Maybe it's a script. Who knows? We'll get to it, though."

Cash is married to the supremely talented makeup artist Tess Wheatley Cash. She laughs at his jokes and goes to his shows, but their dynamic strikes some as odd.

"I'm a comic with a deaf wife," he says. "The jokes just write themselves."

You might think, and Cash might be inclined to agree, that this is low-hanging fruit, an easy joke for a comic to make, but Tess doesn't make her way into Cash's material, partly out of respect for her, partly because that's not where his material is most fertile. In this and in almost every bit in his repertoire, rather than take the easy or obvious route to a laugh, he pushes to the edge and finds humor in the place where the comic and tragic or silly and intellectual meet.

"New material. Yeah, I try some stuff out on Tess or on Wiley or my other friends, but to really develop it I have to work it out on stage, so I put new material in the middle of a set and work on it live. There's a lot of pressure and it's not always successful, but I like putting it out there because of the challenge of finding ways to make it work. There's an added challenge too: resisting the temptation to bail myself out with some safer, more familiar material or resorting to something I know will kill.

"I will tell you though that when I met Tess I thought I was being really charming and funny, but then I thought she was ignoring me. I was like, 'How'd I blow it so fast with this beautiful woman?' But later she told me she's deaf and I said to her, 'That's a relief, I was worried you didn't think I was funny.' I guess it worked because she's been by my side ever since."

Tess and Cliff had their first date only a month and a half into his standup career, a tough time in the development of any artist's body of work. Earlier that day, she'd gotten a cochlear implant — a small, sophisticated hearing device that's connected directly to the auditory nerve — which granted her the ability to hear far beyond the range of their initial conversation, the one where he thought she was ignoring him.

"She had her implant for six, maybe eight hours and we went on our first date. I'm sure I overwhelmed her. I mean, all I do is talk."

Cliff Cash has all sorts of things going on. To keep up with his standup comedy tour dates, visit www.cliffcashcomedy.com or Like his page on Facebook. You can also tune in to *Eat, Dine, Laugh*, a video series he's recently launched that's one part dining review, one part beautiful road trip, one part standup comedy. Recorded as he drives his Million Mile Mercedes (yes, he's trying to put a million miles on his car) hither and yon, it's both entertaining and a glimpse into the life of a touring comic.

You should also check out Sick of Stupid online at www.sickofstupidtour.com and on Facebook. Or, better yet, go see it live.

CAPE FEAR GARDEN CLUB'S 2016

Azalea Garden Tour

STORY BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DONNA THOMPSON

6328 Greenville Sound Road

Mrs. John Camp's favorite garden feature is an elegant lead fountainhead she calls "the Butterfly Girl." As Camp has moved over the years from Greensboro to Franklin, Virginia, and back home to Wilmington, so has her fountainhead. "She's been around." Camp purchased her in New York in preparation for her daughter's backyard wedding reception. "That was a hot, hot summer in Greensboro, but we had the most pleasant weather at the reception." Perhaps the Butterfly Girl was good luck. All these years later, Camp's voice swells with emotion when she talks about her. "She's just so beautiful!" Come see for yourself.

Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road

At Airlie Gardens, Superintendent Scott Childs and his staff have planted more than 50,000 tulip bulbs for the spring bloom. "That, in combination with the daffodils that come back every year, brings our count to over 80,000 bulbs to usher in spring – and the Garden Tour." Childs' arch nemeses are the Airlie squirrels, "who sometimes try to eat the bulbs as fast as we can plant them!" The feature of this year's garden tour will be a family of otters "who have just taken up residency in Airlie Lake. We know the visitors will love them."

2312 New Orleans Place

When gardener Fran Summerlin first began working on the back half acre of her property, she discovered she had an overabundance of yellow jackets. "During the three years it took to clear the vines and vegetation, my first helper with his machete and chainsaw and me with my loppers and handsaw found twenty-three yellow jacket nests!" They have the stings to prove it. Eventually, she installed designated paths and cleared out the dense vegetation. "No more yellow jackets!" she says proudly, and her sun-dappled paths now wind beside her woodland plantings. Another feature is her rustic wooden pathway lined with over 250 wine bottles.

UNCW's Kenan House, 1705 Market Street

Kathy Sartarelli, wife of UNCW Chancellor Zito Sartarelli, gets all dreamy: "My favorite memory of the garden is the first day I arrived to unpack boxes – when I did not even go into the house but instead looked around the garden! The gardener, Dale, told me all about the things growing there as he gave me the 'tour.' When it came time to put in fall flowers, the UNCW gardeners asked which flowers I would like. Of course I said, 'Let's have a chrysanthemum extravaganza!' – and we did! We had dozens all over, including yellow mums lining both sides of the front steps, in homage to a beautiful display I saw in a temple in Beijing. I've grown chrysanthemums for years and love visiting Chinese gardens, as we lived in Singapore and did a lot of travel in Asia." Her favorite space is the walled white garden off the back terrace. "White gardens are actually also called 'moon gardens' because one is able to see the white blossoms and silver foliage by moonlight. They are quite famous in Chinese gardens. I try to show our 'moon garden' off to guests visiting the Kenan House. The gardeners will bring branches they have pruned and nice blossoms for me to use in flower arrangements. One showed me how to float gardenias or camellias in bowls. And as an additional sign of our UNCW pride, we even have a hawk that perches on our fence!"

4901 Trailing Vine Lane

All it took was an article in a landscaping magazine to get Linda MacRae to dig up her yard. "It said grass was the worst ground cover you could use — it was expensive and high maintenance. I decided then to remove all of my grass and haven't regretted it one bit. No more fertilizing, weeding, watering, and working to keep it out of my flower beds." Now, McRae can focus on her gardening. "I have evergreen shrub beds with perennials and annuals and nine sitting areas." Fellow gardener and friend Barton Hatcher thinks MacRae's description is far too modest. "Linda's garden is an amazing, amazing place. She's a brilliant gardener and a wonderful friend."

4000 Chapra Drive

Lisa Schnitzler's 1.3-acre garden is planted with more than 200 native azaleas. Her biggest point of pride? "We do not use any pesticides." Schnitzler is happy to sacrifice a perfect lawn for the abundance of wildlife on her property. "We have a pair of downy woodpeckers that return every year, and we're home to numerous hummingbirds, turtles, lizards and songbirds. We probably have over ninety longleaf pines on the property and a huge Japanese Kwanzan tree." Also on the property is a coop of fancifully named Ameraucana chickens. "We have three hens, Jezebel, Antoinette and Anastasia." She also has one naughty rooster that she named Christian Grey.

5761 High Grove Place

Barton Hatcher, artist and landscaper, has dedicated a special place in his garden to a late friend. "It's where I go to remember our friendship. I've included some of her favorite things — there are lots of hydrangeas (her favorite), a birdbath, and a cherub that I know she would have loved. It's a contemplative space." Hatcher, who is also a painter and a mixed media sculptor, will include an "artist's garden" this year that will feature several of his works.

Magnolia Farm, 102 Forest Lane

Suzanne and Les Edwards' 20-acre equestrian estate was built by Suzanne's grandparents. This enchanted farm has been lovingly passed down through the generations — first to her parents, and then to Suzanne and Les. The property has what Suzanne describes as a "whimsical garden area." There's an old covered wagon Suzanne found "up in the mountains." She's outfitted it to house an assortment of potted plants, a koi pond, and a poolside walkway planted with lush tropicals. Suzanne's favorite space is the old children's playhouse built by her great-grandfather, William Henry Blake. Like the farm, the playhouse has also been passed down through the generations. Built about 100 years ago, it sports five windows, a miniature front porch, and is wired for electricity. "My parents had it restored for my daughters." Who will inherit this treasure? "Well," laughs Suzanne, "I suppose the first one of my girls to have babies."

1301 Johns Creek Road

Sherrel Bunn has introduced many "good insects" in her garden — bees, butterflies, praying mantises and ladybugs — to help Mother Nature. "These pollinators obviously work," says Bunn, "because our flowers are beautiful." The Bunns also had a bumper crop of garden vegetables. "We've also included quite a bit of whimsical art throughout the garden." Bunn says her garden is her play space and she likes to keep things fun for her visitors.

537 Wayne Drive

Eighteen years ago, when Teresa Hill moved her family to Wayne Drive in Forest Hills, she knew immediately that she would love it. "Our then 2 1/2-year-old-son, Graham, looked at me and asked if we could walk in the park, and then took me into our backyard." This glade-like garden abuts Burnt Mill Creek, and the family loves watching the wildlife along the creek. "We have on several occasions had the opportunity to watch barred owls live in our backyard, and see the baby owls grow and learn to fly and hunt. They are very curious and often perch on very close branches in the evening. They seem to enjoy watching us as much as we enjoy watching them."

1104 Merchant Lane

Dr. Scott Colquhoun says his Carolina Beach garden is special to him because it is where he goes "to unplug and connect with nature. Mornings spent in the garden while pelicans fly by and dolphins play have given me immeasurable pleasure." Colquhoun describes himself as a self-taught gardener. Rather than consult professionals, he has instead "relied on years of observation experimentation, trial, and error." Colquhoun now lives in California, but he still visits, though he knows that, "at some point, I will have to give up the Carolina Beach property." He says his sheltered garden by the sea — full of camellias and azaleas — holds many fond memories of "the friends, neighbors, and patients who were part of his Carolina Beach life." No matter where he goes, "the Carolina Beach garden will always have a place in my heart."

1802 Chestnut Street

Lale Lewis says that her century-old house and its grounds used to be fed by well and an elaborate underground grid of irrigation pipes. "We've uncovered them many times when planting." The property boasts over fifteen ancient camellias and two "antique azaleas" that are situated among numerous younger azaleas. Her favorite event was an Azalea Festival ball that she hosted in her garden a few years ago. All the women wore "antique or vintage ball gowns and the men dressed in formal attire."

The 2016 Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour, a leisurely self-guided tour of twelve gardens, runs Friday, April 8, through Sunday, April 10. Visit www.capefeargardenclub.org/azalea-garden-tour for tickets and more information.

Life of the Party

On the corner of South Front and Church Streets, history and whimsy collide

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

This time last year, days before the North Carolina Azalea Festival kickoff, life inside the McClammy-Powell House on the corner of South Front and Church Streets was slightly manic. Gregg Thomas and Tom Faust had lived there for all of six weeks and had already gutted three of the home's four bathrooms, renovated and outfitted the second-floor sleeping porch, and painted or wallpapered every room.

"You had everything ready for the Azalea Party," says Tom.

"Almost," says Gregg. "The front (second-floor) bathroom wasn't finished."

But nothing was going to stop him from hosting their annual soirée, an open bar shindig with live music in the backyard, dancing on the patio and pool deck, and a Southern buffet stocked for 120 guests.

"The Azalea Festival is kinda my thing," says Gregg, whose face lights up at mere mention of it. "When I do something I usually go all out."

Which explains why he and husband Tom wound up buying and refurbishing the 1914 brick Neo-Classical Revival at 423 South Front Street, one of ten stops on the 2016 Azalea Festival Historic Home Tour hosted by Historic Wilmington Foundation on April 9 and 10.

Built for Richard Price McClammy, founding editor and publisher of *The Evening Dispatch*, the house with the high-peaked gabled roof stands on the former site of the home McClammy purchased with his first wife, Janie Bryan, in 1904. McClammy sold his printing business in 1916, at which point, his life story — and that of his house — resembles a bestselling novel with a rapid succession of plot twists: Janie Bryan dies of pneumonia in 1918, and in 1921, McClammy marries second wife Jeanette MacRae. In 1923, infant daughter Sarah McClammy dies, and after suffering

a long illness, Jeanette dies in 1945. At this point, McClammy deeds the house to his daughter, Janie Louise McClammy Matthews, who sells it to local merchant Carl Powell and his schoolteacher wife, Edith Corbett, in 1948.

"Powell died in 1990," says Gregg, "in this house."

All this talk of death naturally segues into talk of the family business.

"We're funeral directors," says Gregg, who grew up on a 40-acre tobacco farm near Fuquay-Varina (20 miles south of Raleigh) and decided at a young age that he wanted to go to mortuary school.

"My parents thought I was crazy," says Gregg, an only child who recalls tagging along on business meetings between his father and the local funeral director who leased additional land to farmers.

"He always wore a suit and drove a Continental," says Gregg of the mortician. "I set my sights."

From where Gregg and Tom are sitting — a grand porch defined by ornate fluted columns and a portico embellished with dentil molding — the late morning sun illuminates their faces. In exactly twenty minutes, a horse-drawn carriage will slow to a stop in front of their house, and as the horses clip-clop left onto Church Street, the costumed driver will gesture toward the massive live oaks lining the sidewalk and tell tourists that the trees are older than the house.

"There's nothing more fun than sitting here and waving to the tourists," says Gregg, whose interest in historic homes stems from childhood visits to Colonial Williamsburg. In fact, he was so taken by the living-history component of Virginia's quaint historic district that, in 2004, he and Tom bought a 1976 replica of the 1774 Bracken Tenement in Fuquay-Varina.

"I call those my Martha Stewart years," says Gregg of the six years spent living full-time at Bracken Tenement, where he designed and expanded upon an elaborate Williamsburg-themed garden that evolved into something of a second job. "Every moment that I wasn't at my office was spent in that garden. I tell people that I created my own hell up there."

In 2010, after renting a getaway house on Third Street for a year and a half, Gregg and Tom bought a second home on Fifth Avenue for weekend trips to the beach.

"It wasn't long before we realized that we wanted to live here all the time," says Gregg, and so they began looking for a spacious house for "full-time living."

A grand Colonial on Live Oak Parkway first stole Gregg's heart, but because he was so enamored with historic downtown Wilmington — and because the price point on the McClammy-Powell House was finally right — the decision was easy. Tom's agreeability helped.

"To his credit," says Gregg of his partner of nineteen years, "Tom could live in a cardboard box. He could. He could live anywhere. I *could not*."

Although the interior is curated in such a way that suggests a shared love of period-appropriate décor, "this is all me," Gregg admits.

A closer look reveals a study of opposites — and that Tom understands and appreciates Gregg's need to create an ambiance that fits the house and reflects his own playful personality. Hence the rabbit décor.

Beyond the front door, an entrance complete with "Lilies in lead" glass sidelights and transom, a resplendent foyer opens to an elegant front parlor where an Essex piano is situated in a bay window flanked by a pair of marble columns and gilded candelabras. Tom, a former IBM software engineer who grew up with seven siblings (and one bathroom) in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, started taking piano lessons ten years ago, "when I was in my 50s." It's obvious when he speaks about his passion for classical music that he could happily exist in this stately room — behind the keyboard — regardless of whether or not his surroundings resembled a formal sitting room bedecked with period wall sconces, a crystal candelabra chandelier, and a massive Elizabethan portrait mounted above the defunct coal-burning fireplace.

"I feel like I'm in Steinway Hall sometimes," says Tom of the front parlor, in which they have hosted private salons for Chamber Music Wilmington. "It's a fabulous performance space."

Throughout the main floor, which includes a Williamsburg-inspired kitchen and an opulent dining room with coffered ceilings, Victorian scroll wallpaper and plate rail molding, exquisite oriental rugs adorn original oak floors and unpainted pocket doors framing both parlors reveal what the woodwork in the foyer (now ivory) would have looked like up until the early 2000s, when it was painted by the home's third owners. Deep reds and soft golds dominate the royal color palette of an interior that Gregg describes as his "interpretation of what the house would have looked like in 1914."

Conversation pieces abound.

Take, for instance, the pair of hand-carved American Victorian armchairs that have been in Tom's family for over a century.

"They looked like they'd come out of a bordello," says Gregg, who bought them from Tom's aunt (long story) and had them tastefully reupholstered.

Or the black walnut corner hutch, the first "really, really fine piece of furniture" that Gregg ever bought, which hosts a striking collection of Japanese Hakata figurines that belonged to Tom's grandfather.

In the middle parlor, a had-to-have-it green leather Chesterfield sofa and matching club chairs inspired the complete remodeling of their former garage on Fifth Avenue — wood-burning fireplace, hardwood floors, wet bar — simply because "there was no where else to put it."

A wooden dollhouse bar cabinet catches the eye, but it's the 1809 grandfather clock that Gregg can't live without.

"If the house caught on fire, heaven help Tom because I'd probably be down here strapping that clock to my back."

Tom takes everything in stride.

"I'd be working on the piano," he replies.

Although the main floor is exquisite — even the tiny half-bath that now features a vessel sink in an exposed brick recess a contractor created by knocking out part of the wall — "we don't live down here," says Gregg. "I'd consider it the entertainment area."

The second floor includes a guest suite, a monochromatic master with four-poster canopy bed, Gregg's "Fifty Shades of Gray" bathroom showcasing an antique barber's chair, and Tom's office, where Riley (chocolate Lab) is curled up beside what Gregg refers to as "The Frazier Chair."

"Tom bought that on his own accord," says Gregg of a chair that "swivels, rocks and reclines" but doesn't quite fit the

ambiance of the house — which is similar to how Gregg felt about two of the home's original light fixtures, which he relocated from downstairs to the second-floor hallway.

But Tom loves that chair.

"If I can't find him at the piano," says Gregg, "that's the second place I look."

Aside from the charming sleeping porch overlooking a synthetic turf lawn and pool hidden from the street by a brick wall, what Tom and Gregg love most about their home is its third floor, a walk-up attic converted into ample living space by the home's previous owners.

"This is the family room," says Gregg of a modern space outfitted with a cozy sectional, the home's one and only TV, and Gregg's village of tiny Williamsburg houses. Photographs of Gregg's 23-year-old son, Grant, and Tom's adult children, Nate and Alix, decorate the walls, and down the hall, two guest rooms and a bathroom feature stunning gable windows.

"This is where we live," says Gregg, who takes a moment to reflect on what it's like to be a steward of this historic home. "Honestly, I didn't know this was the right house for me when we first saw it, but I quickly realized that it was. It is. I'll be coming out of here foot-first."

Historic Wilmington Foundation's Azalea Festival Home Tour takes place Saturday, April 9, and Sunday, April 10. For tickets and information, visit www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/historic-home-tour.

ALMANAC

April

By Rosetta Fawley

Lima 'em up

Our last frost date passes this month. It's time to take advantage of our long, blissful spring season. Have you planned lima beans, also called butter beans, into your garden? You must. They are an excellent source of fiber, lowering cholesterol and helping the body to regulate blood sugar. Even better news, there's still plenty of time to work them into the garden. Originating in Central America, lima beans like warm soil. Plant seeds in the second half of April and through the beginning of May.

There's a choice of pole or bush beans — either is good. The Almanac recommends pole beans for those with limited space. Aesthetically speaking it's nice to have some height in a garden.

Plant about five seeds around each pole, choosing two or three of the strongest as they germinate. Pick rustic poles for a pretty kitchen garden look. Space them about a foot apart in rows that are about two feet separate from each other. Run garden twine along the poles so that the bean plants have something to hold onto as they grow. A sunny spot is best, but if the spring is dry make sure the plants have a good deep watering twice a week — they'll need about an inch of water per week as they're growing and blossoming to ensure plenty of buds. Good garden compost is the best fertilizer, as legumes are nitrogen-fixers, and limas don't need nitrogen.

Limas will grow thick and plentiful over a long growing period — around eighty-five to ninety days, making lush, shaded green tunnels for picking. And playing hide and seek.

Drip, drip, drop
Little April shower
Beating a tune
As you fall all around
Drip, drip, drop
Little April shower
What can compare
To your beautiful sound
Drip, drip, drop
When the sky is cloudy
Your pretty music
Can brighten the day
From "Little April Shower" from Disney's *Bambi* (1942). Music by Frank Churchill, Edward H. Plumb, lyrics by Larry Morey

National Pride

April is National Lawn and Garden Month, so now's the time to get everything looking fabulous. Prune early–flowering plants such as Carolina jessamine and wisteria once they've finished perfuming the air. Cut back dead branches on your cold-pinched shrubs, but don't despair. Leave the roots until early summer. You may well find that they resprout. Keep watering your lawn if the month is dry, especially if it's newly seeded. And show off your spring flowering bulbs to anyone who walks by.

Though April showers may come your way,
They bring the flowers that bloom in May.
So if it's raining, have no regrets,
Because it isn't raining rain, you know (It's raining violets)
And where you see clouds upon the hills,
You soon will see crowds of daffodils,
So keep on looking for a blue bird,
And list'ning for his song,
Whenever April showers come along.
From "April Showers"(1921), music by Louis Silvers and lyrics by B.G. De Sylva

Hunt the Gowk

Keep an eye out for the gowk, a cuckoo that visits us at the beginning of April. While not a rare bird, it can be shy and difficult to spot, compounded by a short hunting season of only twenty-four hours at the advent of the month. Its plumage is varied, ranging from Alizarin crimson to violet. A keen bird-watcher herself, the Almanac would be delighted to hear from any readers lucky enough to spot one.

Secret Gardening

April 2 sees International Children's Book Day. As it's also Lawn and Garden Month, the Almanac suggests giving a child you know a copy of *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Even better, read it with him or her. "If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden."

Arts Calendar

Cape Fear Highland Games

4/2

4/1 Golf Tournament
9:30 a.m. Friends of the Leland Cultural Arts Center Golf Tournament. Three flights, shotgun start, Captain's Choice. Registration: $75. Magnolia Greens Golf Plantation, 1800 Tommy Jacobs Drive, Leland. Info: www.flcacgolf.org.

4/1–3 Spring Book Sale
5:30–9 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Used books, CDs and DVDs. Preview sale for Friends of the Library on Friday. Saturday: items marked $1–3; Sunday: items marked between 50 cents and $2. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6370 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/1–6 Encore Restaurant Week
Restaurants throughout the Port City offer prix fixe menus at special prices. Various locations in Wilmington and surrounding areas. Info: (910) 791-0688 or www.encorerestaurantweek.com.

4/1–10 Designer Showhouse
Area designers transform interior and exterior spaces of a 5,500-square-foot mid-century modern home with two floors designed by John Oxenfeld and Haywood Newkirk. Admission: $20. Bruce and Louise Wells Cameron Estate, 2219 Blythe Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or artscouncilofwilmington.org.

4/2 Azalea Festival 10K/5K
8 a.m. 10K, 5K and one-mile race hosted by the Cape Fear Volunteer Center. Kids, dogs and costumes welcome. Admission: $35–40. Proceeds benefit the Big Buddy Program. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Conservation Way, Wilmington. Info: runsignup.com/Race/NC/Wilmington/AzaleaFestivalrace.

Paws4People 5k

4/17

4/2 Cape Fear Highland Games
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Watch traditional Scottish athletics, learn about Scottish history and heritage, and enjoy live music, great food and beer. Admission: $8–10. Proceeds benefit the Marine Special Operations Command Foundation. 3400 Randall Parkway, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearhighlandgames.com.

4/2 Birds & Beans
9:15–10:30 a.m. Biologist Ben Watkins on the connection between shade-grown coffee beans and the well-being of migratory birds. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/2 CFCC Boat Show
9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Celebrate the craft of boat building with exhibits, self-guided workshop tours, student displays, interactive demos and kids' activities. Features wooden and fiberglass boats, kayaks and skiffs. Proceeds provide scholarship funding for students in CFCC's boat building programs. CFCC Campus, Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7403 or cfcc.edu/martech/boatshow.

4/2 Walk & Dog Dash
11 a.m. Pet-friendly fundraiser includes pet photos, vendors, raffles, lunch from Mission BBQ, and a 1.5-mile dash around Hugh MacRae Park. Admission: $15–25. Proceeds benefit Canines for Service. Hugh MacRae Park Shelter #6, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.caninesforservice.org.

Annie Moses Band

4/30

4/2 Flytrap Family Fun Day
11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Carnivorous plant hikes, crafts, trail run and interpreters in period dress. Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8206 or www.ncparks.gov/carolina-beach-state-park.

4/2 Metropolitan Opera
1 p.m. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Giacomo Puccini's revered *Madama Butterfly*. Admission: $20–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or uncw.edu/olli.

4/2 Edible Book Event
2–3:30 p.m. The Northeast Library challenges guests to represent a literary work or character in edible form. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6370 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/2 Blue Ribbon Run
4 p.m. 5K and 1-mile run held in celebration and remembrance of Julie M. Brown and Christina Gianoplus. Food and live music post reception at Dockside. Admission: $15–30. Autumn Hall, 1202 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/5th-annual-blue-ribbon-run.

4/2 **Landfall Gala**
6 p.m. "Havana Nights" gala featuring Caribbean décor, Latin food, drinks, live auction, percussion and dance performances and live music by Jack Jack 180. Admission: $250. Proceeds benefit The Landfall Foundation. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sunrunner Place, Wilmington. Info: landfallfoundation.org/gala.html.

4/2 & 3 **Herb & Garden Fair**
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Plants, herbs, garden art, herbal products and artisan crafts, plus classes, activities, exhibits and food trucks. Admission: $5. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org/festivals/herb-garden-fair.

4/2 & 3 **Coastal Living Show**
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday 7 Sunday). Annual home show/fundraiser presented by the Wilmington Woman's Club showcasing a variety of gifts, products and services for the home, garden, office and seaside living. Free. Proceeds benefit local nonprofits. CFCC Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: wilmingtonwomansclub.com.

4/2 & 3 **Piecework**
12–6 p.m. Quilting and fiber arts show and sale presented by the Quilters by the Sea Guild. Food trucks and cash bar on site. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: www.brooklynartsnc.com.

4/2 & 3 **Spring Choral Society**
7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). The SeaNotes Choral Society (a 150-member community chorus) perform their spring concert "That's What Friends Are For" directed by Marie Pierre Fletcher and accompanied by Jane Boberg. Free. BCC Odell Williamson Auditorium, 50 College Road NE, Bolivia. Info: (910) 620-6275 or www.sea-notes.com.

4/3 **Color Me Rad 5K**
8 a.m. 5K featuring color bombs at eight different stations plus challenges, dares, a slime station, and gel drop at the finish line. Admission: $25–55. Proceeds support UNCW athletic scholarships. UNCW Campus, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3236 or www.colormerad.com.

4/4 **Golf & Games Day**
10:30 a.m. Golf tournament and games featuring a tennis mixer, bridge, mah-jongg, Mexican train, poker, silent auction and lunch. Admission: $200/golf; $50/tennis; $30/games; $16.50/lunch; $10/putt. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

4/4 **Word Weavers**
7–9 p.m. A Christian writers' group meeting. Life Point Church, 3534 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 619-7344 or sondradron@bellsouth.net.

4/6 **Azalea Queen's Coronation**
3 p.m. Official crowning of the NC Azalea Festival queen plus introduction of the festival party. Free. Port City Marina, 10 Harnett Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/queens-coronation.

4/7 **Nesting Program & Plant Sale**
9–10 a.m. Learn about the nesting habitats of common springtime nesting birds and how to attract them. Breakfast options available. Free. Dry Street Pub & Pizza, 101 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/7 **Celebrity Reception**
11:30 a.m. Meet the Azalea Festival court, celebrity guests and other festival dignitaries during a relaxing luncheon. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/celebrity-reception.

4/7 **Jazz at the CAM**
6:30–8 p.m. Mangroove Jazz Quintet. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/7 **Avett Brothers in Concert**
7 p.m. The Carolina-born American folk rock band The Avett Brothers perform live for the NC Azalea Festival. Admission: $55. CFCC, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/7–17 **Musical Theater**
7:30 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents Green Day's *American Idiot*, a hit musical about three guys who struggle to find meaning in a post-9/11 world. Admission: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/7–10 **Live Theater**
8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Big Dawg Productions presents Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap*. Admission: $16–22. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

4/8 **Airlie Garden Party**
12 p.m. Luncheon and garden party for sponsors and dignitaries of the NC Azalea Festival. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/airlie-luncheon-garden-party.

4/8 **After Garden Get Down**
Dockside party immediately following the NC Azalea Festival's Airlie Luncheon Garden Party. Live music, food, drinks and the best view on the Intracoastal. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/after-garden-get-down.

4/8–10 **Spring Book Sale**
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Used books, CDs and DVDs for adults and children will be on sale. Items will be between 25 cents and $1. Sunday items will be 10 cents. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6370 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/8–10 **Spring Plant Sale**
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 12– 5 p.m. (Sunday). Plants grown by members of the Hobby Greenhouse Club. Portion of profits go to scholarships for local community college horticulture students. Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

4/8–10 **Juried Art Show**
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Wilmington Art Association's annual juried art show and sale features work by more than 100 local and national artists. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/juried-art-show.

4/8–10 **Azalea Garden Tour**
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Self-guided tour of twelve local gardens sponsored by the Cape Fear Garden Club. Ribbon cutting ceremony takes place at the Hugh Morton Amphitheater at 10 a.m. followed by a reception at the Dr. Heber W. Johnson Rotary Garden. Admission: $25. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.capefeargardenclub.org.

4/8–10 **Plein Air Paint Out**
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Eleven artists from Spectrum Gallery will be painting in plein air during the Azalea Garden Tour. Various gardens are featured in the Azalea Garden Tour. Info: (910) 256-2323 or www.spectrumartandjewelry.com.

4/8–10 **Azalea Street Fair**
5–10 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Family-friendly street fair featuring more than 330 arts and crafts vendors and live entertainment on four stages. Free. Market & Front Street in downtown Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/9 **Parade Mile**
8 a.m. One-of-a-kind road mile race that takes place ahead of the NC Azalea Festival Parade. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Literacy Council. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/mgc-parade-mile.

4/9 **Longboard Pro-Am**
8 a.m. Contestants compete in longboard classic Pro-Am heats, semifinals and finals with a pro purse prize of $2,000. Lumina Avenue, Access 4, Wrightsville Beach. Info: wblasurf.org/wbla-longboard-contest.

4/9 **Battleship Anniversary**
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. In celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battleship *North Carolina*'s commissioning, active duty sailors and Marines join the battleship's Living History Crew and the U.S. Marine Corps Historical Company in interpreting the ship to visitors. Admission: $6–14. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

4/9 **Project Puffin & Plant Sale**
9:15–10:30 a.m. Derrick Z. Jackson, co-author of Project Puffin: *The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock*, on how this striking seabird was restored to long-abandoned nesting colonies off the Maine coast. A native plant sale will be held between 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/9 **Azalea Festival Parade**
9:30–11:30 a.m. Festival procession through downtown Wilmington featuring the Azalea Festival court. Free. Third and Market Street in downtown Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/parade.

4/9 **Raise the Hoof**
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Helpers Of Our Farm (HOOF), an educational farm animal sanctuary, invites the public to enjoy

the barnyard petting pen free of charge. Donations accepted. Greenlands Farm, 668 Midway Road SE, Bolivia. Info: (910) 253-7934 or www.greenlandsfarmstore.info.

4/9 Chowder Cook-Off
11:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Annual Pleasure Island chowder competition features chefs from area restaurants plus live music and activities for kids. Admission: $6. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

4/9 Chase Rice in Concert
7 p.m. Country rocker Chase Rice performs live for the NC Azalea Festival. Admission: $36.50. CFCC, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/9 Patron's Party Gala
Black-tie finale celebration held for sponsors of the NC Azalea Festival. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/patrons-party-gala.

4/9 & 10 Azalea Coin Show
10 a.m. Family-friendly event featuring more than thirty dealers from surrounding states. Appraise, buy, sell and trade coins, currency and other numismatic items. Don McNeely of Gold History Corporation will demonstrate gold panning. Free. Elks Lodge, 5102 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.elks.org.

4/9 & 10 Azalea Historic Home Tour
1–6 p.m. (Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Self-guided tour of historic Wilmington homes. Admission: $30–35. Proceeds benefit the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/historic-home-tour.

4/9 & 10 Azalea Boxing Tournament
2:30–6 p.m. National and international level plus military branches. Includes six divisions and a master division. Free. UNCW Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/10 Azalea Festival Finale
4 p.m. Waterfront Music Series kick-off coincides with the NC Azalea Festival Finale. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/festival-finale.

4/10 Chamber Music Concert
7:30 p.m. The Grammy-nominated Enso Quartet performs live featuring Beethoven's *Harp Quartet, Op 74*, Webern's *6 Bagatelles*, Ginastera's *Quartet No. 2*, and the lyrical *Italian Serenade of Hugo Wolf*. Admission: $15–30. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall. Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

4/11 & 12 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. Theme: "Nature Detectives." Pre-registration required. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/12 Over 50s Dance
7:30–10 p.m. The Over Fifties Dance Club's monthly dance featuring DJ Bob Perrone. Ballroom, social and line dance music. Snack and drink provided. Admission: $8. NHC Resource Center, 2222 Shipyard Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 620-8427 or www.overfiftiesdanceclub.org.

4/13 Concerts at the CAM
7 p.m. Performance by UNC Wilmington faculty, students and guest artists offering a varied repertoire of piano music, strings, and guitar. CAM Members and students with valid college ID: $5; non-members: $10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/13 Urban Latin Dance Theater
7:30 p.m. Los Angeles-based dance company Contra-Tiempo performs their newest work, "Agua Furiosa," inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Oya, the Afro-American deity of wind and storms. Admission: $30. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 701 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or capefearstage.com.

4/14 Bird Hike
8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Sight-seeing hike through the Holly Shelter Gamelands along the NC Birding trail. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/14 & 15 Reggae at Greenfield
6 p.m. (Thursday); 5:30 p.m. (Friday). Iration performs reggae. Admission: $25–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive. Info: (910) 343-3614 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

4/14–17 Master Gardener Plant Sale
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Shrubs, ornamental plants, flowers, herbs, vegetables, annuals and perennials, plus hand-crafted bird houses, plant stands and potting tables crafted by the Arboretum volunteer carpenter crew. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: nhcarboretum.org/master-gardener-plant-sale.

4/14–17 Shakespeare Live
7:30 p.m. Dram Tree Shakespeare presents *The Tempest*, directed by Emmy Award-winning animator Michael Granberry. Production incorporates puppetry and circus-style performance art. McEachern's Warehouse, 121 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 726-3545 or www.dramtreeshakes.org.

4/15 Star Party
7–10 p.m. Fun-filled evening of stargazing and astronomy-themed activities including laser-guided constellation tours, a digital planetarium show, telescope viewings and star-finding tips. Bring a flashlight. Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8206 or www.capefearmuseum.com/event/star-party-3.

4/15 & 16 Live Theatre
8 p.m. (Friday); 3 & 8 p.m. (Saturday). The Willis Richardson Players present three one-act plays including *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, by Willis Richardson, Jr., *Contribution*, by Ted Shine, and *A Room with a Double Bed*, by Ruth Johnson. Admission: $17. Thalian Hall Studio Theatre, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/15–17 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with up-cycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry, local honey and more. 1987 Andrew Jackson Hwy (74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

4/16 Tinted Turtle Trot
8:30 a.m. 5K and 1-mile fun run with color explosions at the beginning and end of the race. Colorful team names and costumes encouraged. Admission: $25–35. Proceeds benefit the Island Montessori School FSA. Mike Chappell Park, 501 Dow Road South, Carolina Beach. Info: its-go-time.com/tinted-turtle-trot.

4/16 Walk to Defeat ALS
9 a.m. 3k family-friendly walk held on the UNCW campus to bring hope to people living with ALS. Proceeds benefit the ALS Association's care services and research. UNCW Greene Track & Field, Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: web.alsa.org.

4/16 Golf Classic
9 a.m. Captain's choice tournament. Admission: $100 (includes green fees, golf cart, breakfast, banquet, awards, auction and raffle). Proceeds benefit St. Mary Catholic School athletic programs. Porters Neck Country Club, 8403 Vintage Club Drive. Info: (910) 599-7122 or www.thestmaryschool.org/golf.

4/16 Phlock to the Beach Bash
9 a.m. – 9:30 p.m. Jimmy Buffet-style beach bash featuring an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast, Art on the Apron, Wings and Wheels automotive and airplane show, games, contests, and live music by Mango Boys and Coco Loco Party Band. Cape Fear Regional Jetport, 4009 Airport Road, Oak Island. Info: (910) 457-6964 or www.southport-oakisland.com.

4/16 Oakdale Horticulture Tour
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Horticulturist Eelco Tinga and Superintendent Eric Kozen lead guests on a tour showcasing the flora of Wilmington's rural garden cemetery. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or oakdalecemetery.org.

4/16 Spring Craft Fair
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Outdoor market featuring premier arts and crafts by residents of Brunswick Forest and the greater Leland area. Free. Brunswick Forest Commercial Area, 1090 Brunswick Village Boulevard, Leland. Info: (910) 399-7198 or www.villagesatbrunswickforest.com/craft-fair.html.

4/16 Cape Fear ComicCon
10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Comic event featuring comic and related vendors, cosplay contest, gaming area, expert panel, gourmet food vendors, screenings of classic horror films, the world's largest chocolate candy UFO, live entertainment and a special appearance by Gregory French. Admission: $5–10. Wilmington Moose Lodge, 4610 Carolina Beach Road, Wilmington. Info: (843) 655-8775 or capefearcomiccon.com.

4/16 Metropolitan Opera
1 p.m. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*. Admission: $20–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or uncw.edu/olli.

4/16 Island of Lights Fashion Show
11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Fashion show featuring styles from local boutiques including a catered lunch, silent auction and raffle. Proceeds benefit Island of Lights.

Salt
MAGAZINE

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American Legion Post No. 129, 1500 Bridge Barrier Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 617-5945 or www.pleasureislandoflights.com/fashion-show.html.

4/16 **Music on Market**
7:30 p.m. "The Art of Music: Combining the Senses" includes some of the world's most loved music performed by the Tallis Chamber Orchestra, vocalists, and other instrumentalists with beautiful scenery and artwork from famous museums as the backdrop. Free. St. Andrews Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

4/16 & 17 **SUP Surfing Pro-Am**
8 a.m. Two-day event featuring a "Guide to the History of Surfing," an SUP and longboard clinic for children and a Wounded Warrior Project with special boards and instructors. 703 South Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.wbsupsurfproam.com.

4/17 **Race for the Planet 5K**
8 a.m. 5K in celebration of Earth Day. Flat, mostly asphalt course with excellent views of the ocean, maritime forest and historic Fort Fisher Civil War site. Registration: $30–35 (includes aquarium admission). NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8257 or www.ncaquariums.com/fortfisher.

4/17 **Listen Up Brunswick County**
3 p.m. Listen Up Brunswick County presents folk musician Eliza Gilkyson. Admission: $20–24. Proceeds benefit New Hope Clinic. BCCC, Odell Auditorium, 50 College Road NE, Bolivia. Info: (860) 485-3354 or www.listenupbrunswickcounty.com.

4/17 **Paws4People**
3 p.m. Pet-friendly 5K and 1-mile fun run through Empie Park with prizes awarded to top runners and dogs. Admission: $20–40. Proceeds benefit Paws4People animal assistance programs. Empie Park, 3405 Park Avenue, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/p4p5k.

4/17 **Concerts at the CAM**
4 p.m. Music ranging from Piazzolla tangos to original jazz compositions to Monti's Czardas performed by the faculty of UNC Wilmington's Community Music Academy (CMA). CAM Members and students with valid college ID: $5; non-members: $10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/17 **David Sedaris Live**
7:30 p.m. Humorist and author David Sedaris performs his uniquely comical story routine at UNCW. Admission: $25–60. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/presents/currentseason.html.

4/17–30 **Goat Birthing**
Sign up for the rare opportunity to witness the miracle of life as Buttons the goat gives birth to her first kids. Suggested donation: $50. Donations benefit the Animal Sanctuary at Greenlands Farm, 668 Midway Road SE, Bolivia. Info: (910) 253-7934 or www.greenlandsfarmstore.info.

4/18 **Golf Tournament**
10 a.m. Fundraising tournament with a shotgun start at noon, hole-in-one prize and awards ceremony. Includes golf cart, practice range, beverages and lunch. Admission: $150–250. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: www.playwilmington.org.

4/18 **Lecture**
7:30 p.m. Steven Pfaff of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration discusses the mysterious phenomena Seneca Guns. Free. Federal Point History Center, 1121 A North Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-0502 or www.federalpointhistory.org.

4/19 **Marcus Roberts Trio**
7:30 p.m. The Marcus Roberts Trio (jazz). Marcus Roberts on piano, Rodney Jordan on bass, and Jason Marsalis on drums. Admission: $20–50. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/presents/currentseason.html.

4/19 **The Drifters in Concert**
7:30 p.m. Legendary American doo-wop group The Drifters perform their classic hits. Admission: $10–29. BCC Odell Williamson Auditorium, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

4/19–24 **Carolina Cup**
Stand up paddleboard (SUP) races include the 3.5-mile Harbor Island Recreational, 6.5-mile Money Island Open, 13-mile Graveyard Elite and a kids, Charity Relay. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 616-9675 or wrightsvillebeachpaddleclub.com/Carolina-cup.

4/21 **Alligator Workshop**
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Educator Mike Campbell of N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission discusses the behavior and biology of alligators. Program begins at Halyburton Park and contineues at Lake Waccamaw State Park to observe alligators in the wild. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/21 **Starring Cape Fear!**
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Explore the colorful and interactive exhibit that highlights movie and television artifacts from works filmed in Wilmington. Admission: $5–8. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com/exhibits/starring-cape-fear.

4/22 **Fourth Friday**
6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

4/22 **Making Legends Local Gala**
6:30–8 p.m. (Reception); 8–10:30 p.m. (Show). Local celebrities and personalities lip-sync country hits. Optional Black Ties and Belt Buckles Reception held prior. Admission: $100 (reception & show); $35 (show only). Proceeds benefit the Carousel Center. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-9898 or carouselcenter.org/gala-2.

4/22–5/1 **Children's Theater**
7 p.m. (Monday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association Children's Theater presents *The Secret Garden: Spring Edition*, based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Admission: $12. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalian.org.

4/23 **Walk for Autism**
7 a.m. Family-friendly 5K and kids' dash open to all ages and disabilities. Admission: $25. Proceeds benefit the Autism Society of North Carolina. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Conservation Way, Wilmington. Info: support.autismsociety-nc.org.

4/23 **Work on Wilmington**
8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Hundreds of volunteers connect with regional non-profits to beautify, build and better the community. Various locations in Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2611 or www.workonwilmington.org.

4/23 **Myrtle Grove Market**
8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Local market featuring handmade, vintage, antique and repurposed items. Bring one canned good for admission. 6334 Myrtle Grove Road, Wilmington. Info: www.facebook.com/themyrtlegrovemarket.

4/23 **Flytrap Frolic**
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Explore, celebrate and learn about the region's native carnivorous plants. Festivities include live snakes and birds of prey, garden walking tours, plant scavenger hunt, displays, crafts, face painting and more. Free. Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, 3800 Canterbury Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 790-4524 or www.coastallandtrust.org/flytrap.

4/23 **Butterfly Bungalow**
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Experience hundreds of exotic butterflies flying free around you. Admission: $3. NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, 900 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 772-0500 or www.ncaquariums.com/fort-fisher-exhibits.

4/23 **Springtime for Brits**
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. British car show presented by the British Motor Club of the Cape Fear featuring food vendors, 50/50 raffle, and live music by The Rusty Bumpers. Pre-show party held 4/22 from 6–9 p.m. at Fox & Hound Pub. Registration: $25–30. Proceeds benefit local charities. Wrightsville Beach Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 523-5624 or www.bmccf.org.

4/23 **Earth Day Festival**
12–6 p.m. Family-friendly outdoor festival featuring live music, food trucks, a local brewery, environmental exhibits, green market and a kids' EcoZone. Free. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7137 or www.wilmingtonearthday.com.

4/23 **Relay for Life**
12 p.m. – 12 a.m. Overnight community fundraising walk in which teams camp out and take turns walking around the track. Proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society. Ashley High School, 555 Halyburton Memorial Parkway, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-4871 or www.relayforlife.org.

4/23 **Native Plant Sale**
2–4 p.m. Presented by Duane Truscott of My Garden Plants Company. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/23 **Tapas & Farm Tour**
3–5 p.m. Tapas prepared by the farm chef featuring farm-fresh ingredients, fine wine and craft beer. Admission: $49. Greenlands Farm, 668 Midway Road SE, Bolivia. Info: (910) 253-7934 or www.greenlandsfarmstore.info.

4/23 **GFLA Concert**
6 p.m. Nahko & Medicine for the People perform a modern day medicine show for the mind and soul. Admission: $22–28. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941

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Amphitheater Drive. Info: (910) 343-3614 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

4/23 Symphony Orchestra
7:30 p.m. Season finale features Leonard Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* and Charles Ive's Symphony No. 2. Admission: $6–27. UCNW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

4/23 Hypnotic Brass Ensemble
7:30 p.m. Jazz roots meet hip hop sensibility. Admission: $22–38. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/23 Couplet
Poetry festival featuring readings and workshops with Press 53, Kevin Morgan, NC Poet Laureate Shelby Stephenson, Val Neiman and Sam Barbee. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

4/23 & 24 Parade of Homes
12–5 p.m. Annual home tour hosted by the Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association showcasing the craftsmanship, diversity and quality of fifty of the region's premier homes. Also runs 4/30 & 5/1. Free. Info: (910) 799-2611 or wilmingtonparadeofhomes.com.

4/23 & 24 Coastal Carolina Trainfest
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Train expo featuring examples of model railroads from six different clubs including more than fifteen operating layouts, clinics, demos and vendors. Admission: $10. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-2634.

4/24 Birding Kayak Adventure
8:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden & Mahanaim Adventures for a morning of birding at Eagle Island. Single and tandem kayaks available. Admission: $45. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/24 Touch-A-Truck
12:30–4:30 p.m. Children can see and touch heavy machinery and meet the people who build, protect and serve the community. Event features more than 20 vehicles, helicopter landings, bounce houses and live music. Admission: $6. Independence Mall, 3500 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.jlwnc.org.

4/24 Scottish Library Program
2–4 p.m. Explore the Scottish heritage of Southeastern North Carolina. Program includes talk by Bill Claudill of the Scottish Heritage Center at St. Andrews University, and a performance by the Port City Pipes and Drums. Free. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6370 or www.nhclibrary.org.

4/24 Opera Wilmington
3 p.m. Opera Wilmington sings Gilbert & Sullivan featuring the best of *The Mikado*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*. Narration by Tony Rivenbark; costumes by Mark D. Sorensen. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.opera-wilmington.org.

4/25 & 26 Youth Nature Program
10–11 a.m. Children discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme is "Baby Animals." Pre-registration required. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/26–28 Birding Trip
Spring birding trip to the NC Highlands. Itinerary includes Boone, Grandfather Mountain, Valle Crucis and Elk Knob State Park. Reservations: $350 (includes lodging). Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/27 Page to Stage
6:30 p.m. Writers, actors and producers share original works of comedy and drama with the community and encourage feedback every fourth Wednesday. Free; donations appreciated. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/27 Gypsy Kings in Concert
7:30 p.m. The Grammy Award-winning hit-makers behind "Bamboleo" transport audiences to the South of France with flamenco guitars and Spanish vocals. Admission: $40–75. CFCC Humanities & Fine Arts Center, 701 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage.

4/28 Book Talk
11 a.m. Author/UNC Professor Bland Simpson and wife/photographer Anne Cary Simpson discuss their book *Little Rivers and Waterway Tales: A Carolinian's Eastern Streams*. Admission: $5–15. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.lcfhs.org.

4/28 – 5/1 NC Black Film Festival
Four-day juried festival presented by the Black Arts Alliance showcasing independently made features, shorts, animation and documentary films by African-American

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4/29 Arts Sensation
7:30 p.m. Music and dance spectacular showcasing local talent including The Midatlantic and Company "T" Tap Dancers. Admission: $15. Proceeds benefit Cape Fear River Watch. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: www.forwardmotiondance.org.

4/30 Safari Hunt
9 a.m. Underwater scavenger hunt through a shipwreck with $4,000 in prizes and a cookout to follow. Admission: $20–25. Liberty Ship Marina, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 392-4386 or www.aquaticsafaris.com/safari-hunt.

4/30 MS Walk
9 a.m. Four-mile walk connecting people living with MS and those who care about them. Proceeds benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Greenfield Lake Park, 301 Willard Street, Wilmington. Info: www.nationalmssociety.org.

4/30 Great Strides 5K
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. National family-oriented 5K/fundraiser for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 664-0145 or fightcf.cff.org.

4/30 Healthy Kids Day
9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor family event encouraging healthy lifestyles and active living. Activities include tennis, soccer, lacrosse, basketball, volleyball, T-ball, face painting, bouncy houses, fun run, games, prizes, giveaways, community booths and vendors. Free. Empie Park, 3405 Park Avenue. Info: (910) 341-4631 or www.wilmingtonhealthykids.com.

4/30 Kure Beach Street Festival
11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Food, arts and crafts vendors, and live entertainment. Kids' activities include face painting, balloon animals and crafts. Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

4/30 Metropolitan Opera
1 p.m. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Richard Strauss's *Elektra*. Admission: $20–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or uncw.edu/olli.

4/30 Annie Moses Band
7:30 p.m. Cutting edge sound fuses American roots, folk rock and jazz in stunning performances that feature strings, keyboards, guitar and rhythm. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films
7 p.m. (plus Wednesday at 4 p.m.) Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. *Mustang* (4/4–8); *The Lady in the Van* (4/11–13); *Son of Saul* (4/18–22). Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Ogden Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Opens 4/13. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wednesday Echo
7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night welcomes all genres of music. Each performer has 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 East Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Wednesday & Thursday Poplar Grove Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Wednesday); 3–7 p.m. (Thursday). Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Opens 4/14. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 Us Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM
12–1 p.m. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

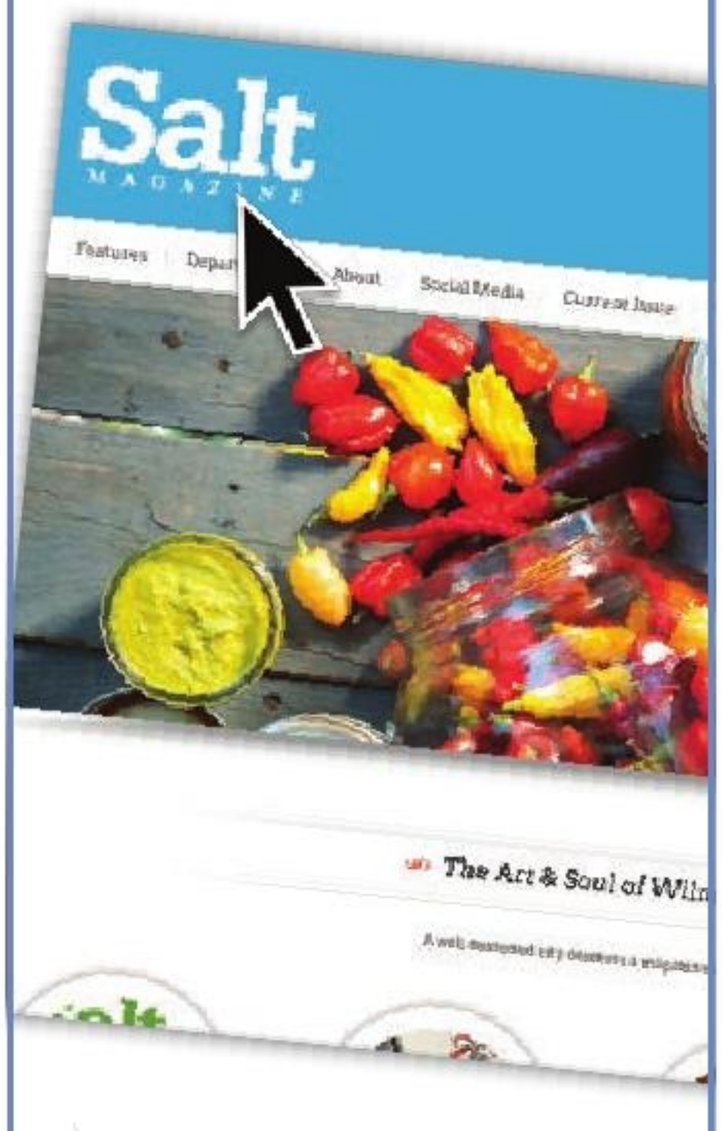
Friday & Saturday Dinner Theater
7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Clyde Edgerton's *Walking Across Egypt*, adapted by Catherine Bush. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday Riverfront Farmers' Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Opens 4/14. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday Bluewater Waterfront Music
4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Band schedule available online. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Visit Salt MAGAZINE online



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Port City People

16th Annual New Hanover Regional Medical Center Founders' Gala

Air Wilmington Hangar at ILM Airport

Saturday, January 30, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

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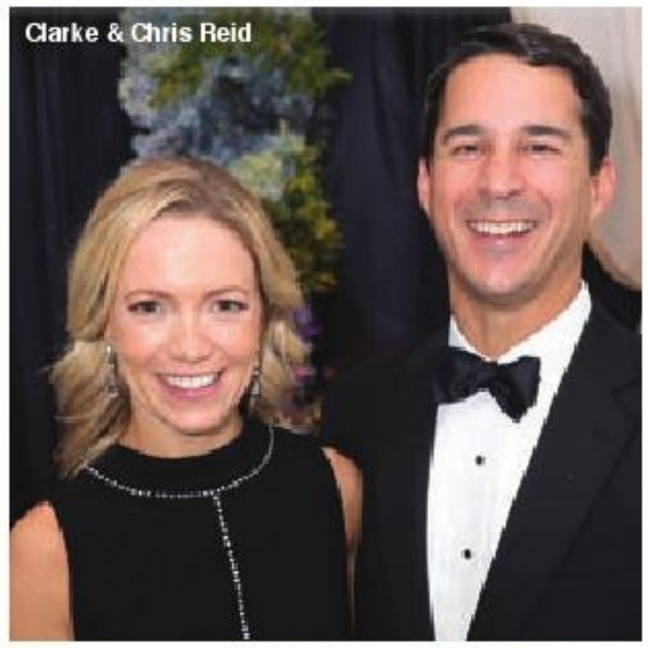

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Frank Albanese, Sandy Coen

Margi & Doug Erickson, Diana Kraus-Anderson

Jason & Lynne Collard

Marv Zumwalt

Mary Kochler, Max Levy, Zack Graybeal, Sherry Kenner, Dwain Gunnels, Sharon Levy

Tricia Wilson, James Adrus

Wendy Sidlofsky, Vickie Ryan-Barr, Sharon Levy

Ed & Diana Collura

Ginnie & Tom Stapelfeld

Port City People

Baby It's Cold Outside Gala

Fundraiser for The Good Shepherd Center

Saturday, February 13, 2016

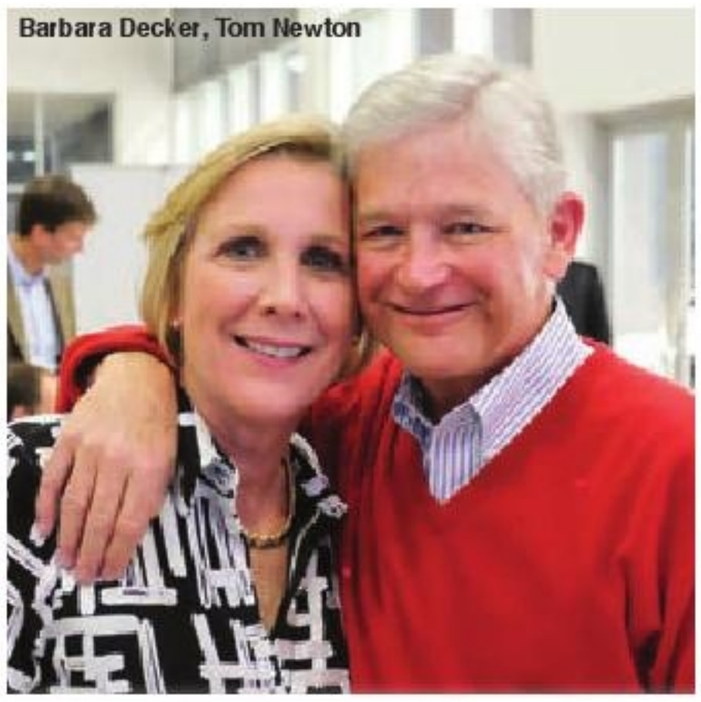
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Chelsea & Steven Smiley, JP Blevins, Meghan Cowan

Greta & Watson Barnes, Carol & Todd Atwood

Katrina Knight, Carolyn Gonzalez, Jane Birnbach, Whitney Smith

Sidney Bouchelle, Laura Beasley, Chloe Hand


Barbara Decker, Tom Newton

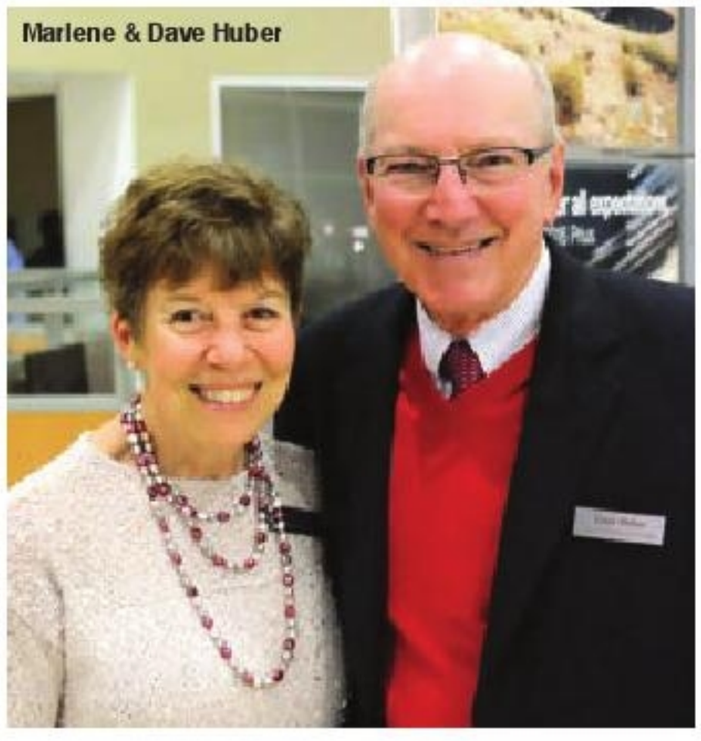
Adair Ellis, Watson Barnes

Michelle Thompson, Jill Mays

Maria & John Sawyer

Will Tidey, Kate Woodbury

Michelle & Thomas Cline


Marlene & Dave Huber

Sandy & Ken Crumrine

Port City People

14th Annual Full Belly Feast Fundraiser

Coastline Convention Center

Saturday, February 27, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Aaron & Eileen Lindquist

John & Chase Shelton, Tim Fields

Paul & Sarah Hendrix

Mary Brannock, Cali Hawk

Rod & English Jeffrey

Kate, Darwin, & Quayde Brandis

Rebekah Roth, Laurie Russotto

Jon David, Daniel Ling, Amy David

Keith & Eileen Allison

Ty Shaw, Tiffany Jackson

Rebecca Haught, Konstatin Sumtsev

Ashlea Kosikowski, Brian Parke

Rammed With the Truth

When you're out of sugar, you serve it straight

By Astrid Stellanova

Might as well just face it. Astrid is soon turning another year older and feeling a little crankier than usual. If you're looking for duckies and daisies you won't find them here. Just the unvarnished truth delivered on the horns of the Ram – Ad Astra, Astrid.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
One thing about it – an Aries will fry it in fat and dish it out. But if they're even half-grown, they've developed enough skin to take it as well as they serve it. So what, pray tell, is going on with you and your bewildering lack of confidence? If you rubbed yourself in bacon grease you couldn't find a hungry dog. Seems you have been riding on the Yes elevator even when you want to say No Way. This is going to change, Love, because your stars are aligning and you have every possibility opening up. Becoming some sort of a team player doesn't mean you forget the fact that the Ram was born to lead, and you, my birthday star, are an MVP.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Lord help me. If your brow is too high for the work you're doing, you're probably out of alignment. Here's a tip: Either lower that cocked-out hip or raise the other brow. Look at it this way: Your job has allowed you to learn some very important skills. And your attitude keeps your fine self elevated way above the hordes. Don't get too big to take out the trash – we all have to clean up our own mess sooner or later, Sugar.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Let's talk about moral and mental hygiene for a hot minute. You have been so competitive and had such tunnel vision that you've forgotten just about all else. If you can get off this notion that only you can drive the bus – no matter who you mow down or run over – you are set for a better month. (And a much nicer commute, as a matter of fact.)

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You love a trend, but don't be locally ludicrous. You've got this idea you have a lock on green things – as in dollar bills and an obsession with juicing. What you might consider, Love, is to promote things of real value, not just things that make you look a certain way. It is never too late to become the person your Mama thinks you are.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Have you got glasses strong enough to help you see the truth? Someone very close to you has been showing you how to find your way out of the surprising mess you have stepped into. Your ego clouds your vision, and you march right off the runway of life, like a modern-day Mr. Magoo.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Somehow you complicate the very thing that's supposed to help reduce your stress. You make cooking look as difficult as trying to construct a microwave oven. Lord have mercy, it is just a case of a frying pan and an egg – and stay with me, because this is just a metaphor. Crack the egg. Make the omelet. Enjoy your time shaking and baking and forget about one-upping the culinary masters.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
You kept everything bottled up until it exploded and you lost your ever-loving mind. You went from peace keeper to making everyone in the room feel more threatened than Ted Bundy's dance partner. Honey, you gotta find a way to let off steam without making a spectacular scene.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You think you're a bigger deal than that new ninth planet? Darling, we are all here to learn, and perhaps you might just want to take a seat and bone up on how to keep your ego more in line with your actual accomplishments. The more you develop, the less you need for everybody to know you are someone special.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Can you smell the BS? Someone in your world has been selling you a line and you have been buying it. They are dangerously close to convincing you that something you value has dimmed. Ask yourself what their motive is. Cherish what matters most to you and don't be swayed by this snake oil salesman.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Well, Honey, a colleague beat you to the end goal, tripping you up and costing you something you wanted. The betrayal hurt more than you want to admit. That kind of thinking is dimmer than Edison's first bulb. They didn't get there fairly and it will all come to light faster (much faster) than an LED bulb.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Financial infidelity is spoiling your bank account. It could also threaten relationships. You don't want your friends and family to know your closet contains the entire QVC collection. I love my pumps and purses, but not more than I love to pay the rent and my (new) trainer. Maybe you have to channel your inner Imelda Marcos into something with more purpose.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Remember that old love that dropped out of your life through a trap door? Well, you may find them back in your life soon. Time to drive a stake through the crappy attitude you've been taking and remember that some people actually deserve second, even third chances. If not, then someone, perhaps another lost someone, is resurfacing, and all I know is sugar and spice are en route.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

The Retired Judge

A lesson on socks. Sorta

By Clyde Edgerton

I was working on a problem regarding equal opportunity, and a friend said, "You need to speak to Judge Burnett. Gil Burnett. Here's his phone number."

I called the Judge and we decided to meet at Starbucks. He'd told me he would be wearing an orange jacket, so when I walked into Starbucks, I looked around, saw a man in an orange jacket — getting a cup of coffee. I approached. He turned, we introduced ourselves and shook hands. I said something. He leaned forward a little, looked at me funny and said, "I forgot my hearing aids." He touched his mouth. "And two teeth."

We both laughed, sat down and started talking. I don't hear well, myself, and I told the Judge a story about my mother in her later years.

A neighbor, who also couldn't hear well, occasionally stopped by my mother's house. The two would sit side by side on the couch in the den, lean toward each other until their heads touched. Then they'd relax and start talking and laughing, their heads together, each able to hear the other — through skull-bone vibrations.

During our talk, the Judge, as I call him now, mentioned a kind of formula about "if" and "which." The next day I couldn't remember what the "if/which" business was, so I called him and asked.

He said, "Just a minute. I always pull over to the side of the road when I talk on the phone . . . OK, go ahead."

"Judge, what was that 'if/which' business you were talking about yesterday?"

"Oh. Oh, yes. Well, Clyde, once long ago, I was selling socks. One day I decided to try to sell some to a prison administrator. Figured I could sell a good batch to a prison. When I asked the administrator if he wanted to buy some socks, he said, 'Oh, no. I couldn't do that. Not now anyway. I have to have a group of bids before I can buy socks and that's not going to happen for some time. You'll have to come back later.'

"So I said, 'Do you mind if I show you a few pictures, sir? That's all, just a few pictures of my socks before I go,' and he said, 'OK.'

"I was in. I said, 'Mercy me. Let me just show you a few socks along with the pictures. You've got to see some of the weaves I have in some of these reinforced heels. These socks last forever, you know?'

"So, I went to work. I showed him some weaves, asked him to feel the softness of the heels, and so on. I pulled out more and more socks — had socks on the table, in chairs, and finally, just at the right time, I said, 'Now, sir. Which ones do you want? These? Look a there; feel that. Or these? That's such a strong weave and with a high top, too. Or these? Now these — feel that — these are very nice. And all these socks are cheap, too. Which do you want?'

"And he bought a big order of socks.

"So you see, Clyde, we went from 'if' he was going to buy some socks to 'which' socks he was going to buy. That's the 'if/which' switch."

There was a pause. "But sometimes," he said, "it can work backwards. You may need to move away from the 'which' question and into 'if' territory."

"As in?" I said.

"Well, suppose somebody is trying to get you to go to either Myrtle Beach or Charlotte. You might just have to say you are unable to travel . . . you turn the question from which place you're being asked to visit to whether or not you want to go, because one of the best reasons for not doing something is that you don't want to."

The next time I was talking with the Judge on the phone, we were discussing the complicated issue we'd been discussing in Starbucks — we got into morality and justice and all that. The Judge paused, and then told me a little story. He was once a law school student and one day the professor asked him, 'Mr. Burnett, if you say I'm a sorry teacher, can I sue you?'

The Judge was ready. "Yes, you can sue me, sir; but the perfect defense is the truth."

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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